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Piercing the Religious Hinge: Understanding Religio-Civic Controversy through Analogical Argument

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PIERCING THE RELIGIOUS HINGE: UNDERSTANDING RELIGIO-CIVIC CONTROVERSY THROUGH ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

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Religion's place in American society has been locked in a binary, seen either as an inappropriate societal "mind trap" or indispensable for community-building. I posit that this binary, or what I call the "religious hinge," limits how we view religion in the public sphere and constrains our understanding of democracy. My project seeks to pierce the current confining view of "religion-as-disease-or-cure" and open up our understanding of public conflict. I approach this task by moving past the abstract questions concerning church and state and examining analogical arguments in particular religio-civic controversies. I examine points of resistance between agonists through a method of *controversia*, an approach that allows me to understand the role of analogies in religio-civic debates. This dissertation focuses on three cases: the Park51 or "Ground Zero Mosque," the Westboro Baptist Church, and the Ordain Women movement in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I contend that the interconnected network of analogy, controversy, and religion expands our consideration for the many voices in communities, ultimately leading to a greater potential for scholarly approaches to religion in the broader public sphere.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Religion's place in American society has been locked in a binary, seen either as an inappropriate societal "mind trap" or indispensable for community-building. On one side, religion is a corrosive poison, described by Christopher Hitchens as something that "[gets] people to hack away at the genitals of their newborn children" (Wiener). For this side of the debate, religion breeds war, destruction, division, all the expense of believing something outdated, irrational, and oppressive. On the other side, religion is an important exercise of the first of our constitutional freedoms. It can, according to The Heritage Foundation, have practical, positive impacts on society by strengthening the family unit, helping people move out of poverty, and improving mental and physical health (Fagan).

Within the context of this debate, scholars of philosophy, sociology, and politics have given important consideration to religion's role and appropriateness in state functions. Jurgen Habermas, for example, aptly inquired, "How does the constitutional separation of state and church influence the role which religious traditions, communities and organizations are allowed to play in civil society and the political public sphere, above all in the political opinion and will formation of citizens themselves?" (Habermas).

Notwithstanding its value, I posit that this debate has created a trained incapacity for how we view religion in the public sphere. My dissertation seeks to pierce this binary by approaching religious-related controversies from a rhetorical perspective, observing the utilization of analogical arguments in specific cases. Because of the malleable, abstract, paradigmatic nature of the sacred and its equally perplexing concomitant symbols, rhetors employ analogical arguments as a way to take hold of the slipperiness of

the sacred and petrify it into manageable ideas. Thus, my project endeavors to 1) transcend the current confining view of "religion-as-disease-or-cure" and open up our understanding of public conflict by 2) examining analogical arguments in particular religio-civic controversies.

This introduction begins by exploring how the political and scholarly framing of religion in the public sphere has been constrained as a dialectical tug-of-war. Next, it highlights both the redeeming and unfortunate effects of this binary—redeeming as the binary acts as a political mobilization strategy, and unfortunate because of the false choice it offers in examining religio- civic debates. Subsequently, I flesh out my rhetorical approach as a way to move from the general tension between church and state to specific arguments among rhetors invested in religio-civic controversies, giving particular attention to arguments made by analogy. Finally, I outline three cases through which I will examine religion, analogy, and controversy: Park51, the Westboro Baptist Church, and the Ordain Women Movement.

THE RELIGIOUS HINGE

When Joe Lieberman was the Democratic nominee for vice-president in 2000, his openness about his faith stirred debate about the place of religion in civic functions. On one occasion, Lieberman said,

> One of the hopeful signs that I see as I look back over three decades now in public life, is that people of faith are taking their principles into the political arena…I really [call] for more of that. I know in some ways this is controversial, but I don't think America suffers from...too much [religion in public life], we suffer from too little of it.

Reaffirming this sentiment was Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who, in his book *America's Real War*, bifurcates America into the religious and non-religious. Lapin echoed Lieberman's assertions about religion in the public sphere, claiming the struggle was "between those who see religion and traditional family as being at the heart of how to restore America, and those who see too much religion and too much traditional family values at the root of America's problems" (Dreher).

Lieberman and Lapin's comments exemplify aspects of what I refer to as the "religious hinge," two competing perspectives that present religion, on the one hand, as opening a door to a better life, and on the other, slamming it shut. It regards America as a nation "rooted in religious ideology and symbols" or as a secular state demanding neutrality (Taylor 48-49). What I would like to illustrate is that, whether the door opens or closes, whether it swings one way or the other, or whether it has allowed passage more than it has inhibited, the hinge has been confined to these two functions: opening and closing. The fullest extent to which academics discuss religion in the public sphere is the service or burden that religion renders to a community.

The religious hinge presents itself as a dialectic competing for an ultimate answer over religion's place in society, and it plays out in two related scenes: American public discourse, and social theory. American public discourse consists of the voices within society that use religion as a justification for or against a political stance or civic issue. American slavery, for example, was both substantiated and rejected by Christian beliefs and biblical scripture.[1] In modern-day political tactics, playing the "God strategy" too

[1] The religious hinge is clearly illustrated by Frederick Douglass, a former slave, as he recounted a story of "a white young man, a Mr. Wilson, who proposed to keep a Sabbath school for the instruction of such slaves as might be disposed to learn to read the New Testament." Conversely, Douglass reflected, "I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty…

lightly for any party, according to David Domke and Kevin Coe, would be committing political suicide (Domke and Coe). Using it too zealously, on the contrary, might associate a candidate with "wackos and weirdos and witches" (Abcarian).

In social theory, the discussion is more self-aware of religious argument, with the tension between scientific and faith-based reasoning in the foreground. It includes both "lay" and academic voices. For example, prominent new atheists commonly call for America to "wake up" to the more practical and intelligent way of thinking by casting off the religious ideologies of the past. Christopher Hitchens asserts, "You will feel better once you leave hold of the doctrinaire and allow your chainless mind to do its own thinking" (Fish). In a similar vein, Sam Harris has argued "that science is better equipped to illuminate questions of morality than religion" (Don). On the other side, Stanley Fish counters that scientific hypotheses and the evidence it accumulates are always contextualized within frames of reference, observation, and a field of inquiry. "There is no such thing," said Fish, "as 'common observation' or simply reporting the facts… Simple reporting is never simple and common observation is an achievement of history and tradition, not the result of just having eyes." Fish's point is that evidence is not *self-evident*. It is not pre-labeled truth inherently geared toward certain theses, but comes about "in light of assumptions…that produce the field of inquiry in the context of which…something can appear as evidence." In other words, science does not just report

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I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—'He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'" See Douglass, Fredrick. *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave,* Project Gutenberg. 1845. Web. June 8 2015. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23/23-h/23-h.htm>.

facts while religion blinds one to those facts. Assumptions are always conceived in a mind cultivated by ideology, regardless of how religious those ideologies are (Fish).

The religious hinge currently steers scholars' perception and discourse when religion emerges in public sphere. The hinge is a conventional way to understand the unfolding of the great American experiment drafted in the First Amendment. It is expedient for academics who wish to tease out the nuances inherent in broad areas, such as the church-state tension, as well as for political figures who use religion as a resource for identifying with audiences. However, I will show in the next section 1) that amid these uses, the religious hinge can limit how we understand religion in democracy, and 2) that such limitations can only be overcome through a rhetorical perspective.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HINGE

The religious hinge proves useful for politics and philosophy. American public discourse works as a mobilization strategy, affording citizens and public figures a means to forge collective ideological identities that manage inclusive and exclusive voices. Through the religious hinge, rhetors can organize their political agendas to fit the expectations of their audiences and meet partisan protocols. John F. Kennedy, attempting to appease concerns about how his faith would impact his decisions in office, stated,

> I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote… I believe in a president whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, or imposed by

> the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office (Kennedy "Transcript").

However, fifty-one years later, upon reading Kennedy's speech, presidential candidate Rick Santorum said he "almost threw up."

> I don't believe in an America where the separation of church and state are absolute… The idea that the church can have no influence or no involvement in the operation of the state is absolutely antithetical to the objectives and vision of our country… to say that people of faith have no role in the public square? You bet that makes me want to throw up.

While it was expedient for Kennedy to emphasize an absoluteness of the church-and-state divide, Santorum appealed to audiences by doing the contrary.

Understandably, audiences are eager to learn the way a politician regards religion so as to align themselves politically with leaders and other citizens. Public figures situate themselves in relation to religion as a way to identify with their followers and oppose their adversaries. And although these mobilization effects allow rhetors to strategically interpellate and persuade audiences, they ultimately force rhetors into certain religious and secular positions, limiting religio-civic controversy to a duel with no certain outcome. As religion becomes used in the public sphere as a mere conduction mechanism for political power, it ignores the holistic reality and presence of religion moving between interlocutors. The value of religion is constrained, and the many voices that respond to and wrestle within religio-civic controversies lose significance.

Just as debates over religion in American public discourse, as noted above, have their merits, debates in social theory likewise can be productive, particularly as an

exercise for generating knowledge. Political theorists and philosophers focus on the tension between church and state, the usefulness and appropriateness of religion in civic affairs, and the heightening or diminishing of opposition between humanists and believers. This vigilant observation can shed light on how the dialectic works and expand theory. Habermas, for example, reflected,

> In democratic discourse secular and religious citizens stand in a complementary relation. Both are involved in an interaction that is constitutive for a democratic process springing from the soil of civil society and developing through the informal communication networks of the public sphere. As long as religious communities remain a vital force in civil society, their contribution to the legitimation process reflects an at least indirect reference to religion, which the political retains even within a secular state. Although religion can neither be reduced to morality nor be assimilated to ethical value orientations, it nevertheless keeps alive an awareness of both elements. The public use of reason by religious and nonreligious citizens alike may well spur deliberative politics in a pluralist civil society and lead to the recovery of semantic potentials from religious traditions for the wider political culture ("The Political" 27).

Habermas's observation deems religious voices important to the democratic process as they "keep an awareness" of moral and ethic-based orientations that exist within pluralistic communities.

A RHETORICAL APPROACH

Essentially, taking a principle-based approach to understanding religio-civic disagreement and making deductive claims about community in its broadest form misses the rhetorical action that shapes and influences the lived experiences of individuals within communities. Existing approaches to religion in the public sphere have left orators and scholars to quibble over religion's political correctness and its complexity as a theoretical construct. What is neglected are the voices[2] that utilize rhetoric as a resource—the means to enter into and impact religio-civic controversies. Thus, in this section, I will illustrate my intervention into the conventional binary that has trapped the general thinking on religio-civic disagreement. I will first explain how making the rhetorical shift from dialectic to *controversia* opens up the possibilities for understanding religion and public conflict. Then I will present a particular means of achieving such a shift and getting down to cases: argument by analogy.

Dialectic vs. Controversia

Dialectic provides an important, principle-based form of argument. It is marked by skillful reasoning by knowledgeable experts. As Thomas Sloane explained, it relies on proofs, calculation, and logic. It "begins in uncertainty and proceeds through inquiry toward more certainty, at least among experts, those equipped to understand the often esoteric materials and forms of proof employed in the inquiry" (88). According to Michael Mendelson, "Dialectic represents an idealized form of rationality, a 'propositional calculus' that seeks to identify the fixed and determinate nature of its subject and, ultimately, to put one position or thesis beyond dispute" (Mendelson

[2] I define *voice* as a dimension of the public sphere that represents a citizen's experiences, perspectives, values, and observations, with the potential to inform and contribute to the larger community's self-concept.

"Quintilian" 278). The dialectic is thus a method that investigates various proposals and supposes that, through the back-and-forth exchanges between specialists, the most certain outcome emerges.

The dialectic, as a method for settling religio-civic disputes, makes sense if the dilemma is, for example, the placement of a line between church and state. Yet this problem-solution construct has overshadowed other ways of seeing religion's presence in public conflict. Mendelson, in his interpretation of Quintilian, makes a distinction between the dialectic which "[seeks] a measure of certainty that compels assent through force of reasoning," and a more rhetorically-based method, controversia, which "locates knowledge in the context of particular persons and places, where very little is ever beyond contention."

> Comparing dialectic to controversy, Mendelson explains that
>
> controversia proceeds by placing multiple claims in juxtaposition and then by negotiating the conflicts among them. Consequently, controversia may be said to place its priority on the exchange among interlocutors rather than in the formal development of one's own claim, on personal hypotheses rather than universal theses, on arguing with others rather than arguing that such-and-such is the case. In brief, while dialectic operates according to formal standards of soundness and validity, [controversia] tacks back and forth among opposing positions; and while dialectic seeks a measure of certainty that compels assent through force of reasoning, [controversia] assumes that the 'truth' will reveal itself in mixed form as a provisional agreement among the parties involved ("Quintilian" 278).

Unlike the dialectic, examining the rhetorically-rich, nuanced voices within a controversy turns our direction away from conflict resolution long enough to consider how agonists argue what is important, or in religion's case, what is sacred. Controversia recognizes the value many sides bring to the public sphere, the light that is shed through difference, and the potential to more fully understand the inherent pluralistic nature of communities. It is the rhetorically-lived experience of the citizen, the collision, connection, and resistance of values that anticipate a decision. Unlike some, who believe "the destructive alternative is to keep the controversy going" (Goodnight 6), controversia considers the "via diversa, the doctrine that (small t) truth is so complex— and maybe in its variety so ungraspable—that one has to approach it through different, untried, and even multiple avenues" (Sloane 8).

Inventio

To overcome the limits of the religious hinge, we must move from speaking generally about public disagreement and follow Sloane's admonition to "steep oneself in circumstance" by "getting down to cases" (Sloane 48, 52, 85, 86, 97, 127, 184, 290). Doing so ultimately expands the potential through which we perceive conflict, allowing us to be more conscientious of the reality of our democratic society and calling our attention to rhetoric as a form of civic engagement.

Fleming's reading of Quintilian illustrates the turn from the dialectic to controversy and provides us an initial step in getting down to cases:

> The goal is not to learn the art for its own sake, as if in every case we would go through the list of proofs, "knocking at the door of each with a view to discovering whether they may chance to serve to prove our point";

> rather, the goal of study is to develop that "power of rapid divination" which will lead us straight to the arguments appropriate for the case we are in (180).

This approach invites a different set of questions, like "what exactly was (or should be) done, or what could be the nature of the deed?" (Sloane 93).

The way in which one begins the rhetorical process of exercising wise judgment is to consider a case's stasis. Stasis refers to the "stock questions" within a given controversy. These questions provide a way to discover where opposing values intersect, where the specific points of dispute reside, and how these values resist one another. Stasis is, for Sloane, the core of *inventio* or invention, and invention is synonymous with analysis. "A key to inventio, particularly in rhetoric, as taught by our humanist forebears lay not in a recitation of the topics but in giving thought to the question, Who cares? What is being said by whom on both sides of the controversy?" (93).

Invention takes the rhetorician to a deeper understanding of the site of opposition and intersection. In other words, invention is more than learning to ask the "right questions," a checkmark for quality, or the generating of more questions, a checkmark for quantity. It strengthens and works in tandem with the rhetorician's disposition to make judgments about the controversy, to assess what questions and arguments may be more relevant than others, and especially give priority and deference to that which may potentially contradict the rhetorician's own values and beliefs. This idea is paralleled by Sloane's description of invention: "how to think in a certain way about what you're doing when you create discourse." (61).

Mendelson, again in light of Quintilian, illustrated the inventive process through his pedagogical program of cultivating rhetorical sensibilities in his students.

> The rhetor, unlike the philosopher and dialectician, is operating in response to specific contingencies by calculating the relative merits of opposing positions and developing the skills of skeptical inquiry, rhetorical invention, and pragmatic judgment. In the process, the student contemplates not simply what can be said in behalf of one's own initial assumptions but also what arguments exist both for and against alternative perspectives. In consequence, it is not the binding validity of an enthymeme but the dialogical exchange among partners that is the locus of interest for the *progymnasmata* and its elegant continuum of exercises ("Quintilian" 283).

Locating the point at which the alternative perspectives come into contact thus provides a method for observers of religio-political controversies to think more critically and thoughtfully about the case and the many voices therein. Rhetoricians are ultimately able to foster the mental balancing act that leads to a more well-rounded scope of the controversy within a democratic context.

Thus, my first step in transcending the dialectic bias of the religious hinge is to employ controversia as a method, which entails narrowing in on a case, identifying the controversy's stasis, and analyzing the inventive process operating at the center of orators' rhetorical performances. Because of the array of ways one can argue, my next step will involve looking particularly at analogical arguments. Not only will this specific mode of argument allow me to follow a rhetorician's objective of getting down to cases,

but I will draw conclusions about the inherent relationship between controversy, religion, and analogical argument.

A part of that conclusion will connect the sacred to analogy as analogy is connected to religio-civic controversy. Essentially, I will argue, analogies in religio-civic controversies 1) serve as a way to participate in the ambiguities between church and state by 2) translating the metaphysical and uncertain into the familiar and concrete, or making elements of (im)piety more amenable within civil discussions. They also 3) act as a ground-zero equalizer for argument to take place amongst an arbitrary and unleveled playing field, and, consequently, 4) function as tools that arrange and construct living ideas, thus becoming co-constructors of what is sacred for a community. While argument by analogy is a common and effective strategy in debates at large, it maintains a special role within religio-civic controversies, operating as a portal through which we can tap into a "secular" community's unsettled concern for the sacred, its *secular piety* (Ricoeur 713).

Translation

Attempting to reconcile the church-state tension, Habermas entered the church-state dialectic by building upon the scholarship of John Rawls. Habermas posited that civic proposals immersed in religious discourse need to be "translated" into a "generally accessible language" before such proposals can reach and influence judicial officiaries. If citizens are to present religiously-motivated arguments that challenge state laws, they must translate the principles of religious doctrine into secular warrants. This would provide a space for the religious voice to enter the public sphere without fear of retribution. Habermas advised that "an institutional filter should be established between

informal communication in the public arena and formal deliberations of political bodies that yield to collectively binding decisions" ("The Political" 25-26).

Habermas's aim was to accommodate religious voices that desire to enter the civic sphere, and he suggested that this can be accomplished through translation. Of course, his proposal was met with resistance.[3] The "filter" Habermas referred to could be viewed as the process of translation, speaking from a religious orientation to civic officials operating within a secular paradigm. I would like to extend this idea of translation but recognize it on the "ground level" between citizens, as something that happens naturally, during active arguments, through analogies. Religious concepts often do not have secular counterparts, and secularists tend to struggle giving civic merit to religiously-motivated arguments. This is illustrated in Carrie Ann Platt's examination of how religio-civic translation failed in the Proposition 8 controversy in California.[4]

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[3] Fred Dallmayr took issue with the noble endeavor to translate religious arguments within a pluralistic society. He asks, "Are modern rationalist texts—from Kant to Carnap, Quine, and Rawls—not exceedingly difficult texts constantly in need of interpretation and reinterpretation and hence of translation into more accessible language? And what about courts? Do the judgments of courts not always involve interpretation, application, and thus practical translation of earlier legal texts, precedents, and judicial opinions? And do members of parliament not always claim to interpret, apply, and hence translate the will of the "people" (or at least their constituents)? And where is there an end to such interpretation and translation, that is, the effort to distill the meaning of texts, utterances, and events and thus to render them accessible to understanding?" See Fred Dallmayr. *Being in the World: Dialogue and Cosmopolis,* Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 2001, 143. Print.

[4] Carrie Anne Platt examined how the Habermas-Rawls translation process would affect arguments in an actual controversy. In the case of the 2008 same-sex marriage debate in California, many churches and faith-based institutions made explicit efforts to argue in support of Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Much of this debate occurred through campaigns, fliers, and door-to-door interactions petitioning support for the ballot. Despite the religiously-motivated efforts, Platt found the arguments of faith-based organizations to be predominantly void of religious language and principles, that they instead made secular-based claims. Separating arguments from their religiosity, Platt deduced, provided a way for solicitors to reach a wider audience, but it also led "to the loss of key meanings or the distortion of values." Carrie Anne Platt. "Translating Religious Arguments for the Public Sphere: Constructing 'Overlapping Consensus' in the Debate

Argument by Analogy

While Habermas's proposal pushes our understanding of the potential for religion in the civic public sphere, I would encourage an examination of the discursive disagreements that occupy religio-civic controversy and learn how translation works from itself. Argument by analogy is a kind of translation that happens during debate. Analogizing, drawing comparisons between two things or understanding one thing in terms of another, is a form of arguing. The purpose of analogical arguments is to connect people of varying backgrounds and also solicit a way an idea can and should be understood. Analogy is something that agonists within religio-civic conflicts frequently employ when presented with opposing ideas. Exploring the analogical arguments in such cases reveals the uniqueness of religio-civic debate due to religion's murkiness in secular arenas.

As a result of religion's complicated presence in public conflict, analogies provide rhetors the ability to associate something ambiguous, multi-faceted, and subjective, and transform it into something organized, relatable, and persuasive. Religion thrives on symbols and comparisons, and exists through the constant acts of interpretation and collective identification. Thus, religion and analogy are inseparable. Chaim Perelman reflected, "Very often…especially in philosophy and the expression of religious thought, analogy is at the center of the original vision either of the universe or of the relationship between man and the divine" (Perelman 114). This description places "the expression of religious thought" in the same realm of analogy. I will use Perelman's detailed description of analogy in *The Realm of Rhetoric* as a rhetorical framework of analysis.

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over Same-Sex Marriage." *The Functions of Argument and Social Context*. Ed. Dennis Gouran. Washington, D.C.: National Communication Association, 2010. Print.

Perelman explained that analogy is comprised of two components: the theme and the phoros. The theme is the subject at hand, or, in the context of argument, the central topic of debate. The phoros is the example to which the subject (the theme) is being compared. The phoros is what is familiar to or understood by the audience, and the theme is the point of contingency open to translation, debate, and pliancy in meaning. The phoros and theme come from different places, and analogy brings them together by asserting a similitude between them. However, as with any comparison, "analogy highlights certain relationships and leaves others in the shadows." A battle, for example, could be compared to a game of checkers, yet in the process it ignores the trauma that often accompanies war (115-116, 119).

Perelman provided some explanation of analogies in the context of controversy. "In criticizing a thesis illustrated by an analogy, we must either adapt the analogy so that it corresponds better to our own conceptions, or replace it by another, thought to be more adequate." Rhetors use analogies as a way to convince audiences that one thing is similar to something else, that it shares some identity or value or meaning with another thing. Perelman noted that "there are limits to such procedures," and so the translation process of analogy invites rebuttals and counter arguments from opposed voices. Lieibniz, for instance, rejects Locke's idea that the acquisition of knowledge is analogous to experiences leaving their trace on a clear piece of marble. "Rather," Perelman summarized, "its role is analogous to a veined piece of marble that is therefore predisposed to receive one figure rather than another" (119-120).

Religio-civic controversies are sites of analogical negotiations over truth. Approaching them from this perspective distances us away from the religious hinge that

pervades American public discourse, the great mobilizer of the church-state spectrum. It moves us beyond mobilization and the "what is right" mentality and toward a circumstantial and rhetorically-driven public sphere. To illustrate the seemingly natural presence of analogies in religio-civic disagreement, the reason rhetors employ them, and the rhetorical importance of piercing the binary of religion in the public sphere, I will, by exigence, analyze the analogical arguments amongst orators in three specific case studies. In the next section, I'll provide brief descriptions of each case and qualify them within the scope of this project.

PARK51

In the summer of 2010, the proposal to build a community center in downtown Manhattan became the focal point of a national controversy. Plans for the building included a performing arts center, a culinary school, an exhibition space, a swimming pool, a gym, a restaurant, a library, art studios, and a Muslim prayer space (Basharat). While these facilities and amenities are commonly found in major U.S. cities, the proximity of this "Muslim mosque" to Ground Zero was said to be a "slap in the face" to the victims of the families of 9/11, a defilement to the ground's sacred space, and even a victory for Islamic terrorist groups. Conversely, some felt that constructing the building was an exercise of religious freedom, and abandoning its construction site would symbolize a transgression to the constitution and an oppression of Muslim-Americans.

A variety of public figures, politicians, and everyday citizens weighed in on the controversy. Sarah Palin commented, "That feels like a stab in the heart collectively of Americans who still have that lingering pain from 9/11" (Dwyer). Blogger Pamela Geller described the construction of "the Ground Zero Mosque" as building "a 15-story middle

finger to America" (Geller "911 Mega"). She also wrote, "Build a Mosque back home. They want all the benefits of being in America while being detrimental to our culture!" (Geller and Sekoff).

Citizens on the other side responded just as passionately. Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in a speech given on Governor's Island, reasoned,

> The simple fact is that when the Pope was faced with this issue with Auschwitz where there was a convent right near Auschwitz he had a perfect right to keep the convent there. The nuns had a perfect right to keep it there. Understanding the anguish that it might cause he took the convent back and put it somewhere else (Bloomberg).

My purpose in approaching this case is to offer an example of how the many voices in a community utilize analogy as a means to argue the nature of public symbols in religio-civic contexts. Analogy offers rhetors an important means of securing and dismantling representations of the sacred and the profane. The intense debate over the presence of a Muslim community center near Ground Zero, as with many controversies, represents broader cultural, social, and political tensions within pluralistic communities, and it drives rhetors toward analogical argument as primary rhetorical strategy.

In adopting a framework of *controversia*, my analysis covers a broad range of voices in the public sphere. I look at prominent rhetors such as Obama, Gingrich, Geller, and Palin, but also a host of comments that appear in editorials, blogs, interviews, and televised panels. I hope to cast as wide of a net as possible in order to live up to the promise of my project—to pierce the religious hinge by giving value to even the "smallest" voices by looking at analogical arguments.

WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH

The Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) makes profane something for which the majority of America maintains a pious deference—the death of military men and women, the victims of 9/11, and other national tragedies. The WBC is a small unaffiliated Baptist congregation located in Topeka, Kansas. They travel to many venues across the country warning the nation of God's wrath. In their words, "This nation has turned to worship the symbols of God's judgment on her" ("WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH"). Whereas in the Park51 case, in which I looked at a myriad of different analogies that rhetors used to ascribe certain meanings to symbols, in the case of the WBC, I analyze one overarching analogy—*American is God*—and the rhetorically opposed exercises of this worship. The rhetorical artifacts I examine are not limited to a particular protest, but a collection of demonstrations, fliers, posters, and propaganda administered by the WBC. I also look at the news coverage and the commentary to such coverage that centers on the WBC, and I mine each for arguments within the overarching analogical frame.

The WBC's polemic points to the defilement of what American society holds as sacred, namely death. One of their fliers reads,

> If you sign up to be a part of the military, you sign up to stand proud in God's crosshairs for the cause of fags and whores… These soldiers are dying for same- sex marriage and other sins of America. God is now America's enemy, and God himself is fighting against America. Thank God for dead soldiers.

Known for their obscene and unapologetic language, the WBC may appear to focus their antagonism on gay citizens. However, a more patient response allows one to

see their strategy as a rhetorical maneuver that upsets the national piety maintained in civil religious ceremonies, like military funerals. Attacking the gay community is a way to block the normalized communicative pathways through which citizens experience America. The WBC's protests, as we will see, function as an intervention into the commonplace analogy that sustains America's deference to its God. In an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how citizens experience America, I locate and analyze the voices that fall outside of the religious hinge in order to recover a greater rhetorical dimension that exists in the case of the Westboro Baptist Church.

THE ORDAIN WOMEN MOVEMENT

The case of the Ordain Women Movement (OWM) is a shift (though not a complete turn) from the previous two case studies. It involves individuals in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) requesting the church to extend the ordination of the priesthood, an office reserved for men, to members who are women. The controversy has generated a lot of debate about official church doctrines including the practice of excommunication and the voice of the church citizen. I begin with a question concerning church policy: how much can members raise a dissenting voice while still maintaining their membership. This question, however, only reinforces the religious hinge, and thus I examine how Mormon feminists construct an analogy to create social and policy reform. To do this, I look at media reports, blogs, websites, radio interviews, images, and church sermons that offer a wealth of analogical renderings. Different than the previous two cases, which present analogical argument as an aggressive, anxious means to secure meaning and rhetorically impose a claim, this case reflects analogical argument as a delicate process that achieves deliberation between lay

members and church "sovereigns." It shows how analogy works in controversies to level the playing field among interlocutors. More than this, it illustrates the nature of analogies as rhetors move from the familiar (phoros) to the theme (the unfamiliar), slowing down our observation of this kind of enthymeme. The work of analogical argument, I argue, reflects a process of faith, opening up the potential for new, unexplored understandings of the roles of women in society.

While the previous two case studies dwell in the religio-civic realm of public conflict, the case of the OWM is a seemingly isolated, private dispute in a somewhat obscure religion. However, the efforts, petitions, and protests of women and the responses from the church and many members mimic the rhetorical patterns found in civil movements at large. Thus it is a fruitful example for understanding more adequately the role of "civic participation" in religio-civic controversies even within a religious context. In other words, we can learn a great deal about the nature of religio-civic controversies by stepping outside of them and stepping into a more religiously-entrenched community. The hope of this chapter is to understand how publics within private religious organizations draw upon the greater democratic forces underpinning American ideology.

In selecting these three cases to understand the significance of religious discourse in the public sphere, I am presenting and defining religious discourse a certain way. At one level of discourse, religion can be understood as a subject. One might refer to religion to construct a particular identity for herself or others. Here, religion represents a belief in God, an institutional affiliation, or an exercise of faith, and rhetoric invoking religion this way characterizes this level of discourse. A second level of religious

discourse has to do with a mode of speaking. Kenneth Burke utilized religious vocabularies as a vehicle to understand our symbol-using propensities. But more than a mere metaphor, religion comes to help us see something about our piety for things expressed through language. God and devil terms, for example, are a framework for understanding our attitude toward certain words such as "democracy" or "America."

Because I wish to move beyond religion as a political mobilizer or a topic of church and state, the cases I have chosen for this dissertation concern religious discourses that pertain to the sacred. One could simply water down the Park51 controversy to "Muslims vs. Christians" or "boundaries of the First Amendment," but I look at discourse that illustrates conflict not between religions, but between pious relationships to symbols. There are other religio-civic controversies that do not fit this level of discourse, such as the case of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. Some believe that he "should not be weighing in on issues that touch on technical and scientific matters that some contend are still debatable" (Gibson). To what degree should a religious authority, or anyone using faith-based reasoning, be able to comment on political issues in the broader public sphere? This question falls under the religious hinge, inviting scholars to make Habermasian observations about the delineation of religious and secular spheres. My project moves beyond questioning the appropriateness of religious voices in the civic arena, but considers what we can gain from listening to citizens argue religiously over various issues. In other words, my analytical approach studies cases that involve more than a tension between church and state. The three cases in this dissertation include conflicts over sacredness, worship, and identity. Ultimately, despite a study reflecting a sharp decline in Christian affiliations and an increase in religiously unaffiliated

Americans, religious piety maintains a secure presence in our American democratic society and continues to ignite religio-civic controversies ("America's Changing").

The textual artifacts I have used for my analysis are eclectic. The archive of voices and information was chiefly derived from a process of searching key terms such as, for example, "would be like" and "Ground Zero Mosque." From here, I read and viewed as many news articles, blogs, comments, interviews, and protests as I possibly could. As I read, I noticed a variety of patterns and themes that would emerge through the texts, and I categorized these into findings that reveal something about analogy, controversy, and religion. These findings are merely a slice of the rhetorical landscape contained in these cases, and I encourage further analysis to glean other important insights that move us out of the either-or thinking about religion.

CONCLUSION

My dissertation defines the religious hinge as a lens that allows us to see religio-civic controversies a certain way, but a lens that comes with blind spots. In piercing this hinge, I hope to bring back into view what is lost. In the conclusion, I discuss the rhetorical *texture* comprising the complex and organic meanings that are discursively attached to symbols, meanings that are co-constructed through a process of analogical argument and subsequent objection. The texture shapes the sacred and profane in a myriad of ways, reflecting the depth and complexity of individual and shared experiences within the American community.

The intent of this dissertation is not to placate disagreement in pluralistic societies, nor is it to provide a method for arguing more strategically, although these may be consequent bi-products. The goal is to pierce the binary of the religious hinge to the

effect that citizens and academics may have a more perspicacious sensitivity to the nature of communities, especially a community's secular piety. What can be gained by my rhetorical intervention into the binary is a greater consciousness of the lived experience of rhetors responding to actual exigencies in America. After analyzing controversies that take place in America, I outline several observations about our national public sphere and invite further scholarly research.

CHAPTER 2

PARK51:
LIKE CONTESTED BRICKS IN DRYING MORTAR,
A RACE FOR THE RIGHT ANALOGY

> Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel… And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? …And the people answered him not a word.
>
> —1 Kings 18:19, 21

> When you hear like 13-story mosque, you go, wow, there's a lot of praying going on there. But then when you find out there's a swimming pool, a basketball court, you know, a lot is in the presentation."
>
> —Roy Sekoff[1]

Following 9/11, despite a dramatic upsurge in stereotypes and hate crimes against Muslim Americans, a study showed that attitudes toward Muslim Americans varied according to situational contexts. Rather than negative attitudes issued toward Muslim Americans in general, negative attitudes were more present, for example, when Muslim Americans were boarding a plane or selling a used car. But attitudes were more positive toward Muslim Americans vs. non-specified group members when it came to the scenario of being surrounded by many Muslim Americans at a crowded bus station (Khan and Ecklund).

The peculiar emergence of a Muslim community center near Ground Zero was a situation whose "research subjects"—comprised of American citizens—expressed judgment not under conditions approved by an institutional review board, but freely across social networking sites, news shows, and in the public square. The national attention to the "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy in 2010 catalyzed a struggle between

[1] See HLN. "HLN: Outrage Over Mosque Near Ground Zero." Video. *YouTube*. 26 May 2010. Web. 8 June 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Di-fU1PWpc>.

rhetors discerning religio-civic identities through synecdochal buildings and spaces. The quick, intense surge in controversy surrounding the proposal to build a Muslim community center two blocks from Ground Zero, I argue, dwells in the "symbol-foolish"[2] propensity for humans to urgently understand and make meaning of the world around them. In this case, rhetors used analogical arguments to create certainty around and manage relationships between various entities in a religio-civic context.

More than just a political mobilization strategy or a philosophical point of departure, the Park51 controversy highlights the significance of religion in the public sphere as a rhetorical exigence. Rhetors responded to this exigence by arguing the symbolic nature of Park51 and Ground Zero. I explore how this symbolism was defined through analogies that draw upon aggressive idioms, religio-political tropes of "good" and "evil," and language that reflects the "fearful" and "fearsome" potential for war.

THE HINGE AND PARK51

To be sure, the case of the Park51 controversy can be easily recognized, even valued, through the religious hinge: the legal questions that surround the construction of the facility and the moral-philosophical underscoring of the freedom to build and to offend. This angle of the hinge appears in Sam Harris's conception of the controversy's stasis:

> Should a 15-story mosque and Islamic cultural center be built two blocks from the site of the worst jihadist atrocity in living memory? Put this way, the question nearly answers itself. This is not to say, however, that I think

[2] Jessica Enoch's reading of Kenneth Burke interprets his term "symbol-foolish" as "using language to compete and combat with each other on a daily basis." Jessica Enoch. "Becoming Symbol-Wise: Kenneth Burke's Pedagogy of Critical Reflection," *College Composition and Communication* 56.2 (2004): 273.

> we should prevent our fellow citizens from building "the Ground Zero mosque." There is probably no legal basis to do so in any case—nor should there be. But the margin between what is legal and what is desirable, or even decent, leaves room for many projects that well-intentioned people might still find offensive (Harris).

Harris's words reflect an ordinary tendency amongst academics, politicians, and citizens to move from the particular to the abstract, to make philosophical deductions within, in this case, an axiological framework, and to find answers to difficult questions in best and worst-case scenarios, all as a means to settle a dispute by arriving to a kind of make-shift answer. This make-shift answer is similar to Anne Marie Helmenstine's description of a scientific law: something that generalizes observations. "There is no 'proof' or absolute truth in science," she said (Helmenstine). However, people prefer certainty over the suspension of the unknown . Thus it is necessary for society, when disagreements arise, to move forward with a decision as to accommodate and sustain democracy. Harris briefly acknowledges the legal basis for constructing Park51, focusing more on the moral dilemma that citizens face in a democracy—the paradox of having rights versus using them—which may be his way of resolving the issue (notwithstanding any ulterior motive he may have in entering the debate).

Legalities

While Harris opens and quickly closes the question of the lawful realization of Park51, his reference to legalities is worth noting. Katrina Trinko specified three ways the project could be legally impeded, none of which had to do with the building's religiously-driven symbolism. These included:

unpaid property taxes (which could be a violation of developer Sharif el-Gamal's lease agreement with New York utility company and site owner Con Edison), the need for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) to approve construction on the Park51 site (it's above subway lines), and the potential Public Service Commission (PSC) review, which might be necessary if Con Edison agrees to sell its share of the property to the mosque developers (Trinko).

However, most agonists sidelined these legalities (except for a firefighter who petitioned the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission to declare the building a national landmark) (Neroulias). In a piece title, "Ground Zero Mosque Has Legal Rights, Not Ethical Ones," Stephanie McNeal emphasized that while people may be "offended by the presence of a mosque not far from Ground Zero," they cannot constitutionally prevent construction (McNeal). A Chicago Tribune op-ed echoed this sentiment, positing that in any legal showdown, "the mosque would win, hands down" (Byrne). Redirecting the conversation away from potential legal issues, one commenter exclaimed, "Everybody's missing the point. The issue isn't civil rights [or] constitutional rights… The issue is sensitivity" (Somin). Quoting a UCLA constitutional-law professor, Time contributor Romesh Ratnesar said the case was "open and shut," but added this important detail: "But the question isn't going away" (Ratnesar).

Essentially, if the Cordoba Initiative and Soho Properties, the organizations spearheading the project, decided to change locations and distance the center away from Ground Zero, many supporters would view the move as succumbing to a social pressure that contradicts the First Amendment. But because no action had yet taken place, many of

the opposing arguments highlighted the relinquishment of decency in exchange for the demand of exercising rights.

More to the point, Harris's comments circumscribe the controversy into a Kantian debate about moral agency. They also summon a minor discussion about some outlying factors that may have legal standing, and a dialectic resolution may be required. This shows the expediency of the religious hinge in one aspect. In another aspect, many people were conscientious of the mid-term elections happening later that year and referred to the controversy as a political "turning-point issue." The religious hinge, thus, also reflected the mobilization of voters according to political ideologies. However, as useful as the hinge might be to direct important philosophical discussions or provide a framework to measure faith-based correlations between politicians and voters, it failed in this case to provide a categorical "us vs. them" bifurcation between partisans due to the high instability of Park51's multifaceted symbolism.

A Problematic Mobilization Strategy

Speaking out against his competitor Rick Lazio, gubernatorial candidate Andrew Cuomo claimed that Islamophobia is what motivated Lazio to question the proposal to build Park51 (May). Was Cuomo or any other politician who took a side on the issue using it to connect to voters? According to a Siena College poll taken in August, the number of New Yorkers who believed that the "community center and mosque" had a constitutional right to be built (64%) matched almost the exact number who opposed the project (63%). Twenty-two percent of voters believed "the candidates' position on this issue will have a major effect on their vote," 37% said "it will have some effect," and 39% said "it will have no effect." Pollster Steven Greenberg specifically stated,

> Of the 22 percent of voters who say the candidates' position will have a major effect on their vote, opposition to the proposed mosque dwarfs support 92-7 percent. Among those voters, Cuomo currently has the support of 38 percent, compared to 33 percent who support Lazio and 17 percent who support Paladino.

In short, more New Yorkers believed a candidate's position on Park51 would not influence their vote, but the majority of those that believed it would said they oppose the project. Cuomo, a Democrat who supported Park51, was a few points higher than his closest competitor, a Republican, when it came to voters who would be influenced by the candidates' position on Park51 (Seiler).

Nationally, Park51 was claimed to be "[tying] Democrats in knots" (Vogel). Barack Obama, in an after-dinner speech at the White House, reflected,

> I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country. And that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances. This is America. And our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakeable (Post Editor).

However, the next day, Obama qualified his comments by saying, "I was not commenting and I will not comment on the wisdom of making the decision to put a mosque there. I was commenting very specifically on the right people have that dates back to our founding. That's what our country is about." Furthermore, White House spokesman Bill Burton attempted to clarify the confusion surrounding Obama's follow-up comments:

> Just to be clear, the president is not backing off in any way from the comments he made last night. It is not his role as president to pass judgment on every local project. But it is his responsibility to stand up for the constitutional principle of religious freedom and equal treatment for all Americans. What he said last night, and reaffirmed today, is that if a church, a synagogue or a Hindu temple can be built on a site, you simply cannot deny that right to those who want to build a mosque ("Under Fire").

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat who was seeking reelection, took an opposing stance. One article mentioned that Reid was facing a "tough reelection bid this fall." It also included commentary by Reid's spokesman, Jim Manley, who followed up Reid's position, affirming that "the First Amendment protects freedom of religion. Sen. Reid respects that but thinks that the mosque should be built someplace else." Curiously, Manley, in the same breath, said, "If the Republicans are being sincere, they would help us pass this long-overdue bill to help the first responders whose health and livelihoods have been devastated because of their bravery on 9/11, rather than continuing to block this much-needed legislation." He was noticeably attempting to promote a bill (that would give health benefits to first-responders at Ground Zero) by using the center to corner conservatives into an inconsistency (Shiner).

But the partisan stance on Park51 for conservatives was also unclear. Kenneth Vogel believed that the controversy was demanding a difficult balancing act from Republicans and tea party conservatives because of potentially conflicting conservative values like religious freedom and property rights. Sarah Palin became considerably vocal

on the project, tweeting: “Peace-seeking Muslims, pls understand. Ground Zero mosque is UNNECESSARY provocation; it stabs hearts. Pls reject it in the interest of healing” (Siegel). Responding to Obama’s (apparent) support, she inquired, “Will Obama express US lingering pain & ask Muslims for tolerance by discouraging 9/11 mosque while he celebrates Islamic holy month tonight?” (Haberman). However, conservative Mark Williams, chairman for the prominent political action committee Tea Party Express, was let go because of his “high-profile opposition to the mosque.” Conversely, another tea party leader, Judy Pepanella, spoke out against the building but emphasized that her tea party group, Conservative Society of Action, had not “taken any official position opposing it.” Leading conservative figures including Mitt Romney, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, and Rick Perry officially declared their disapproval of Park51 while Ron Paul, Chris Christie, and former George W. Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson decried such alignments as intolerant (“Is it appropriate”).

Given the complicated, unreliable, and contradictory nature of the political discourse surrounding Park51, employing the religious hinge as a categorical framework for analyzing politics would be more compromising than useful. On the upside, for some political leaders (especially tea partiers), the issue provided them an opportunity to redefine their partisan ideologies and prioritize their concomitant agendas. Yet the debate left many prominent politicians divided, even contradicting their own stances as the issue became too unwieldy. The internal fracturing, the capriciousness, and the extraordinary compulsion of political figures to assume a position all point to Park51’s highly volatile and multifaceted religio-civic symbolism.

Unfortunately, when it comes to discussing religion in public sphere, this is where the conversation usually ends. The religious hinge's clutch on the significance of religion in the secular arena features the public and academic pontification of philosophical quandaries, the processing and reasoning of the case in the judicial system, and the management of political identities between partisans and in connection to voters. More than a consequence of "mid-term electoral fodder" (Pierce 66), the controversy over a proposal to build a Muslim facility in lower Manhattan is an opportunity to see beyond the binary that tends toward the ill or aid of religion to society. Often missed are the voices within communities (which may in fact include politicians and philosophers, but so many more) that are using the democratic public sphere, in the words of Olson and Goodnight, "to block enthymematic associations and so disrupt the taken-for-granted realm of the uncontested and commonplace" (250).

THE PRAYER SPACE OVERFLOW

A useful starting point for presenting Park51's history comes from CNN's "belief blog."

> Worshippers at Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's small mosque in the city's Tribeca neighborhood found themselves stuck in lines outside the door during Friday afternoon prayers. Rauf's storefront mosque, called Masjid al-Farah, had started out holding one weekly prayer service but had ramped up to three or four Friday services in recent years to accommodate the surging crowds. Even then, many worshippers inside said they felt rushed, knowing there were people outside waiting for a space to pray, while those in line worried about getting back to work on time (Gilgoff).

Previous to the national uproar that ensued in 2010, hundreds of Muslims had reportedly been gathering for months at an abandoned Burlington Coat Factory, using it as a prayer space overflow from Rauf's Tribeca mosque located half a mile away. Ro Sheffe, a community board member, believed implementing a new facility was "desperately needed" by the local residents. He reasoned that "as more people move downtown, the lack of residential amenities is a problem… (Bliman) [A new facility] will be a wonderful asset to the community" (Jackson and Hutchison).

The inconvenience of the cramped space was vocalized by local congregants. Mohammad Zab, who prefers the accessibility of the abandoned building to the Tribeca mosque, said, "I had to wait outside there, which is not fun in the wintertime… There was no space." Another attendant, who works five blocks from the building, explained that "this is the center of downtown. It's perfect for everyone" (Gilgoff). After completion, the number of Muslims supposed to utilize the space specifically for prayer would range between 1,000 and 2,000 a week (Jackson and Hutchison). Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA)—and wife of Rauf—affirmed the prayer space would "accommodate the needs of the growing Muslim community in lower Manhattan." She explained, "We went to the community board so we could excite them and find out what their needs were because it's really for the community. We have not determined the full scope of this project" ("Mosque Near").

As Khan alluded, the "practicality" of the facility was just the beginning. Rauf envisioned the project on a much greater scale than a prayer space. When Sharif El-Gamal, chief executive of Soho Properties, purchased the abandoned Burlington Coat Factory for $4.85 million in cash, he did so with the intension to build a condominium

complex. One of the investors was the Cordoba Initiative, an interfaith group founded by Rauf (Blumenthal and Mowjood). Instead of condos, Rauf convinced Gamal to create a "cultural centre" catered to the growing Muslim population of lower Manhattan (Peer).

Rauf's idea for a more dynamic facility had been conceptualized years before during his leadership as the local imam, a position he began in 1983. In 1999, Rauf attempted to buy a former Y.M.C.A., located on 23rd street in Manhattan, with the intention to create "a kind of Muslim Y." The seller's broker was David Lebenstein, the son of a Holocaust survivor, who explained that "the sale would have gone through but for financing difficulties" (Barnard). One congregant who actively attended the Tribeca mosque during the summer of 2010 commented in September, "Feisal's been waiting for decades to find a space…There's very limited space for prayer around the city" (Gilgoff).

The 2009 "Cordoba House" project echoed the function of the 1999 facility. Basharet Peer reported that Rauf

> [modeled] Cordoba House on a Jewish-run cultural centre, 92nd Street Y, a much-loved New York space for literary readings and public conversations on cultural and global affairs, where writers such as Ian McEwan, Javier Maries and Salman Rushdie have read from their work. Rauf imagined that Cordoba House would play the same kind of role for American Muslims that institutions such as 92Y played in helping the Jewish community become part of mainstream America (Peer).

The grandeur of the building became evident as details of its physical makeup were released. Thirteen (and later fifteen) stories high, the "blue and green, glass and steel, modernist tower" (Peer) would eventually anticipate "a 500-seat auditorium, a

theater, a performing arts center, a fitness center, a swimming pool, a basketball court, a child care center, an art gallery, a bookstore, a culinary school, and a restaurant" (Sweeny and Opotow 495). The $100-150 million dollar building would be, as the *New York Times* described it, "bold" and "striking" (Blumenthal and Mowjood).

Not only would the facility be defined as providing intellectual stimulation, physical conditioning, and spiritual sanctuary specifically for Muslims, the project would seek to foster interfaith dialog between Muslims and the surrounding community. Rauf and Khan have become internationally known for their efforts to bring tolerance and understanding to a religion that is regularly stigmatized, disputed, and feared (White).

Born in Kuwait to Egyptian parents, Rauf moved to New York at age 17, subsequently receiving a degree in physics at Columbia University. In 1983, he began leading prayer groups in his Tribeca mosque, located 12 blocks from the World Trade Center (Gilgoff). Fourteen years later, he founded ASMA, whose mission is "to elevate the discourse on Islam and foster environments in which Muslims thrive;" furthermore, it wishes to "[strengthen] an authentic expression of Islam based on cultural and religious harmony through interfaith collaboration, youth and women's empowerment, and arts and cultural exchange" ("Mission").

Throughout his career, Rauf has been invited by national and global organizations to provide a "reasoned Islamic voice on various issues." One of these organizations is the US State Department, which has sent Rauf abroad three times to discuss American perceptions of Islam. Rauf has also been asked to participate in a number of televised interviews, think-tank lectures, international conferences, FBI briefings, and conversations regarding American politics. In 2004, he authored the book *What's Right*

With Islam: A New Vision for Muslims and the West. In a book review, the Christian Science Monitor described Rauf as "a bridge builder between Islam and America"(Peer).

Daisy Khan's journey in becoming a leader for the well-being of Muslim Americans happened much later than Rauf's, and, according to Khan, by necessity. "I kind of got defined as a Muslim woman by 9/11," she said. "Until then I just thought of myself as a career girl who's an imam's wife whose name is Daisy who is a New Yorker and an American. Muslim was just my own spiritual identity." While she had never thought of herself as a feminist, she felt she needed to respond to the increased discourse surrounding the treatment of women in the Islamic world, namely the forced marriages, stonings, honor killings, and restrictions on women's education. She decided to quit her corporate job in 2005 and begin working full time as an activist alongside Rauf. The next year, she founded Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) as a means to "empower Muslim women around the world." At the first WISE conference in 2006, Khan brought together 150 women from 25 different countries. One woman who attended compared the gathering to Seneca Falls. "We realized," reflected Khan, "we were creating the modern-day Muslim women's suffrage movement"(Andrews).

PARK51 AS A SYMBOL

The Cordoba House accumulated a symbolic resonance as the project was discussed publicly. Lynn Rasic, a spokeswoman for the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, commented, "The idea of a cultural center that strengthens ties between Muslims and people of all faiths and backgrounds is positive." The name itself, "Cordoba House," was used in reference to the Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba, Spain. That edifice is considered by some to be one of the most impressive architectural structures in the

world (Minder); Cordoba House is "inspired by," in Rauf's words, "the city in Spain where Muslims, Christians and Jews co-existed in the Middle Ages during a period of great cultural enrichment created by Muslims" (Rauf). Khan described the building as an identity marker which would distinguish Muslims from radicals: "For us, it's a symbol, a platform that will give voice to the silent majority of Muslims who suffer at the hands of extremists. A center will show that Muslims will be part of rebuilding lower Manhattan" (Peyser).

However, besides the "blessing" which the cultural center would be to the community as articulated by the Cordoba Initiative, the building appropriated other meanings as well, principally by its two-block proximity to Ground Zero. This dissonant essence developed over time, but the prismatic lens through which politicians, citizens, and media outlets understood and discussed the facility was present early on. A *New York Times* article (Blumenthal and Mowjood) "marked the beginning"(Sweeny and Opotow) of the controversy's narrative. As one of the earliest descriptions of the project, the article appeared to maintain an apologetic tone that spoke to Rauf's vision of bridge-building and practicality. Yet, its description of the prayer space overflow situation highlighted the potential for conflict.

This conflict was evident in the article's title itself, "Muslim Prayers and Renewal Near Ground Zero," which conveys an immediate poignant sentiment to media consumers, but becomes unsettling as its words underscore a more problematic possibility. "Muslim prayers" demonstrate Muslim activity, activity which had been intensely scrutinized in America since 9/11. Because it would be "near Ground Zero," that activity, or any Muslim activity near Ground Zero, is highly evocative. The title's

use of the word "renewal" contains a dualistic function that, on the one hand, connotes a fresh start at something positive, but could also refer to a more sinister activity, a resurgence of malicious behavior that is all too familiar to a victimized nation.

Some of the commentary cited so far in this chapter has been extracted from this *New York Times* article, including Rauf's idealistic descriptions that are wrapped in the promise of the structure. Yet the article intertwines the wider social and historical context with the proposition of the center, presenting an unsettling image shrouded in paradox. One particular passage illustrates this conjoining of virtue and vice: "An iron gate rises every Friday afternoon, and with the outside rumblings of construction at Ground Zero as a backdrop, hundreds of Muslims crowd inside, facing Mecca in prayer and listening to their imam read in Arabic from the Koran" (Blumenthal and Mowjood). One interpretation of this passage fixes readers' attention on the limited space available, the need for a more accommodating facility, and the inconvenience of the noise that disturbs the serenity of praying and reading sacred scripture. Another reading, however, would highlight the image of "hundreds of Muslims" gathering at Ground Zero engaging in non-Christian or "foreign" activity.

Supporters of the cultural center were not out of touch with the building's pejorative resonance. They gave meaning to their endeavor to build the facility in light of the possibility of opposition. Khan did not specify what that opposition would look like, but spoke to a responsibility by Muslims to edify the community that would be realized by the project. "Whatever concerns anybody has," she said, "we have to make sure to educate them that we are an asset to the community" (Jackson and Hutchison). One of Rauf's supporters, Joan Brown Campbell, believed that the center's proximity to Ground

Zero would reflect the "true" identity of Muslims in contrast to the radicals who have terrorized the US: "Building so close is owning the tragedy. It's a way of saying: 'This is something done by people who call themselves Muslims. We want to be here to repair the breach, as the Bible says.'" Fatima Shama posited that "we as New York Muslims have as much of a commitment to rebuilding New York as anybody" (Blumenthal and Mowjood) and even a family member of a 9/11 victim justified the project by way of symbolism: "I want tolerance, I want inclusion, and there is no better embodiment… This is a living city. Ground Zero is not a static shrine" (Hernandez). Likewise, Khan affirmed, the Cordoba project would show people "that Muslims are part of the solution, that they are fighting side by side with non-Muslims, that our collective enemy is extremism… [T]he 'whole religion' of Islam, not just four planes, was hijacked on 9/11." Furthermore, the project "would be a bulwark against Islamic terrorists, 'amplifying the voices of moderate Muslims' and creating 'a counter-momentum against extremism so that another 9/11 does not ever happen again" (Andrews). In other words, as Rauf explained, the building would pose as a counter force to the attackers of the World Trade Center and other Islamic radicals. "We want to push back against the extremists," he said (Blumenthal and Mowjood).

The opposition to the proposed "Ground Zero mosque" also began interpreting the building's symbolism, however, in negative ways. On August 3, 2010, New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission voted 9-0 against a petition to preserve the property as a landmark (Neroulias). Demonstrators held signs that said, "Islam builds mosques at the sites of their conquests and victories;" "Don't glorify murders of 3,000. No 9/11 victory mosque." Many citizens believed it would "be a symbolic monument to

the triumph of Islamism in the United States" (Elseth) and "a constant reminder of what they did to us on 9/11" (Paddock and Goldsmith). Debra Burlingame, the sister of a pilot killed in the 9/11 attacks, reasoned that the building "is a deliberately provocative act that will precipitate more bloodshed in the name of Allah" (Byrne).

Another interpretation invited people to

> [i]magine the symbolism of [the Ground Zero mosque] in the Muslim world, particularly the radical Muslim world, and the wind beneath the wings of future terrorists that will inspire. The mosque's rising will be seen not as an act of brotherhood or civility, but as a triumph of violent jihad: that they took down two towers of infidels and replaced them with a mosque (Cain).

In order to replace the ambiguity of the "Ground Zero Mosque" with a greater degree of familiarity, rhetors commonly employed analogical arguments to compare what is known to what is unknown. It was the concern over the "solidification" of meaning, which the public would absorb and collectively sustain, that triggered the vast range of different analogies, some of which became frequently re-articulated. Thus, like contested bricks in drying mortar, a race for the right analogy ensued, and it would endure, in Burke's words, "until the last time"[3] Huffington Post editor Roy Sekoff illustrated this point well:

[3] The full quote is, "We are the instrument of our instrument. And we are necessarily susceptible to the particular ills that results from our powers in the way of symbolicity. Yet too we are equipped in principle to join in the enjoying of all such quandaries, until the last time." Jane Blankenship. "'Magic' and 'Mystery' in the Works of Kenneth Burke," *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*. Ed. Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1989, 132. Print.

> [T]hat is actually the point of this whole discussion, Joy, is that this is a discussion where I can actually see both sides. I really can. But symbolism cuts two ways. I mean I can understand one man's slap in the face is another man's gesture of brotherhood. The question though is, at the end of the day: if it's going to go either way, where does America come down? (HLN).

ANALOGIES AND RELIGIO-CIVIC SYMBOLS

Even the faintest glossing over the literature of argument by analogy brings the focus to form and function: two objects share certain properties and reflect a relationship. Merrilee Salmon described the relationship using a scientific example. Lab rats are commonly used for testing the effects of certain drugs before the drugs are administered to humans. If a drug produces certain physical or psychological effects on the rats, it is believed that similar outcomes will happen for humans. While the similarities between entities are not always stated explicitly, most people would understand and accept the premise upon which the argument is constructed: drugs affect rats and humans similarly. There can be, however, challenges to such a construct. Opposing an analogical argument involves pointing out the dissimilarities between the entities (e.g. rats and humans have different brain sizes and sophistications).

Salmon explains matter-of-factly that, when using analogical arguments, "we should try to state explicitly any *implicit* points of analogy contained in the premises" and that "specialized knowledge may be needed to state the implicit similarities." She refers to the potential for arguments to become fallacious if the necessary standards for analogical reasoning are not met (Salmon).

Certainly, a breakdown of the function and *proper* use of argument by analogy is helpful in a cognitive light. This research allows us to recognize the soundness of analogical arguments and the manner by which drawing comparisons between two disparate objects can be useful. However, the voices that constitute communities live in controversy, and controversy "is a site where the taken-for granted relationship between communication and reasoning are open to change, reevaluation, and development by argumentative engagement" (Goodnight 5).

When individual rhetors make analogical arguments in the public sphere, they are not necessarily concerned about the *degree* of similarity or disparity between the theme and phoros, or how *expert* an audience is on the subject. They simply use analogies as a resource to persuade others and impact the world around them. Analogical arguments, spoken in living color, break rules and use fallacies to their advantage. When Newt Ginrich, as we will see, compares Khan and Rauf to Nazis, he is making certain judgments about Park51 and its creators while simultaneously ignoring (or not realizing) the sweeping limitations of his comparison. But controversy always brings in an opposing voice, and Gingrich's statements will certainly be challenged. The idea is not that "anything goes" but that a rhetor is *making an argument* about the relationship between two things, or that a relationship exists at all. This falls more in line with Chaim Perelman's assessment of analogy: "Every analogy highlights certain relationships and leaves others in the shadows" (Perelman 115). Ultimately, regardless of the decorum that rhetors follow in a controversy including the soundness and relevancy of their arguments, arguments are issued that invite responses, all of which become part of the larger rhetorical exigence.

Turning back to the example of the lab rats, the context by which rats and humans are perceived to have a shared relationship is crucial. Humans commonly receive medical care, particularly through drugs, and from this extends an implicit hope or anticipation from humans that we are similar enough to rats to foresee how drugs would affect us. However, in another context, the comparison between rats and humans could be less than desirable. In 2013, gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli critiqued Washington D.C.'s pest control policies, claiming they protected rats from being killed. "They have to relocate the rats," he said. "And, not only that, that's actually not the worst part, they cannot break up the families of the rats!" Cuccinelli then made this unexpected comparison: "So, anyway, it is worse than our immigration policy. You can't break up rat families. Or raccoons, and all the rest, and you can't even kill 'em. It's unbelievable" (Wing "Ken"). Immigrants have historically been compared to animals, diseases, and natural disasters, particularly in early U.S. restriction debates (O'Brien) (Moore). Such comparisons, unlike pharmaceutical trials, greatly influence social identity and immigration policy (let alone the experience of "foreigners" in American society) as the analogies become rhetorically significant. It is through this lens that I will explore the analogical arguments in the Park51 controversy.

The uniqueness of this and other cases within a religio-civic context, unlike others that engage analogical arguments, is that the themes and phores circle around units that maintain highly symbolic identities. Claiming that one thing that is highly symbolic is like another thing that is highly symbolic is in part what accounted for the enduring and intense lifespan of the Park51 controversy. Symbols are as much a matter of personal interpretation as they are a co-constructed entity within a wider societal frame of

reference. This is implied in the term "religio-civic" itself. Religion and national civility refer to the experience of individuals that are bound together through ideology. Symbols have a way of organizing people, but they also connect to each person severally within that group. In light of this, it would be challenging to meet Salmon's criteria of depending upon an "expert" who could properly discern the abstract or scientific qualities shared between the theme and phoros. Gingrich allocates the analogy of Nazism, not referring to Nazism as would a scientific typologist or as a historian, but as a rhetor using symbols by necessity to create and recreate shared identities.

A SLAP IN THE FACE

The angst rhetors felt in defining Park51 is evident in its various titles: "community center," "mosque," "Cordoba House," "Ground Zero mosque," "Park51," or "the mosque at Ground Zero," among others. Of course, this only further complicated the process of deciphering it. Pamela Geller, one of the leading voices in opposition to Park51, appeared with Khan and HuffingtonPost.com editor Roy Sekoff on the Joy Behar show to discuss the controversy. Behar inquired, "I understand that it's not exactly a mosque. It's a community center, right, Daisy?" "Yes," she responded. "It's a community center with a prayer space inside." Geller interjected, "A prayer space is a mosque. It's a mosque." Sekoff tried to mitigate the facility's identity by adding, "When you hear like 13-story mosque, there is a lot of praying going on there. But then when you find out there's a swimming pool, a basketball court, you know, a lot is in the presentation." Geller, however, resisted. "On their side it was a mosque until people started to take issue with it. So I think the deception, the fact that there is a deception—'it is a mosque,' 'it's not a mosque'—*it's a mosque*." "Well," responded Khan. "It's a prayer space. Whether

you want to call it a mosque or you want to call it a prayer space, what we have to do is we have accommodate the needs of the growing Muslim community in lower Manhattan…" (Behar, et al.)

As mentioned earlier, the original name for the project was Cordoba House, intended as an echo of the "interfaith" building in Spain. But many people including Newt Gingrich, began associating another meaning to Cordoba House, who said it was a "deliberately insulting term…[It is] the capital of Muslim conquerors who symbolized their victory over the Christian Spaniards by transforming a church there into the world's third-largest mosque complex" (Gingrich). It was Gamal, chairman of Soho Properties, that changed the name from Cordoba House to Park51. Khan, unenthusiastic about the change, commented, "[Ours] is a big vision, not just an address" (Andrews). Gamal would eventually attempt to disassociate the interfaith characterization from Park51 altogether (Stone).

Other names followed. Sarah Palin dubbed it the "9/11 mosque" (Haberman) and Geller referred to it as the "monster mosque" (Geller "Monster Mosque") and a "mosquestrosity" (Geller "Ground Zero"). One term that gained prominence throughout blogs and forums was "the middle finger mosque" or the description that it was a "15-story middle finger to America" (Sowell). This latter analogy speaks more specifically to the relationship between the symbolically-charged building near Ground Zero and a symbol of offense, a hand gesture. It also marks a point of divergence between the adjective-driven descriptions that define what Park51 *is* and the verb-driven actions that illustrate what Park51 *does*.

Rhetors sought a variety of ways to articulate offensive action, drawing upon common idioms that connote wrongdoing. One New York Post writer said many individuals felt "they've received a swift kick in the teeth" (Peyser). Palin exclaimed that it "feels like a stab in the heart collectively of Americans" (Dwyer). The statement that the project is a "slap in the face" was widely used: "This is a direct slap in the face *to all the victims of Sept. 11 and their surviving family members*" (Ruth); "This is an outright insult and slap in the face of *we Christians, patriotic Americans and morally good people*" (Russell); "I sincerely defend your right to [build] under the religious freedom that we all enjoy here in America. [However,] constructing this mosque near Ground Zero is a slap in the face *of that religious freedom*" (Bauer).

I italicized portions of these statements to highlight the subtle changes in the direct object, that which is receiving offense. In defining who was being offended, it would better uncover that which Park51 stood for. For some, the offense is geared towards those more intimately connected to the tragedy, including the victims and their families. As 9/11 was projected, as Pierce argued (Pierce 56-57), as an ongoing, present-day trauma, and as Ground Zero came to represent "all the victims of Sept. 11 and their surviving family members," the mosque became a symbol for those who committed the attack.

The second italicized entity receiving offense was "we Christians, patriotic Americans and morally good people." The use of *we* is immediately dichotomizing. The rhetor first defines the *we* as *Christians*, which categorizes offenders and offended by religion. *Christians* is further contextualized by *patriotic Americans*, those who are not only American citizens but those who pay a certain kind of allegiance to America. This

allegiance is characterized by a moralism that positions America, the *good* nation, above the *evil* of the other nations. One commenter summarized this notion by saying, "Yes, there are peace-loving Muslims in the United States, however, Islam's God is not our God" ("Mosque A Slap").

Finally, the third italicized entity receiving offense was the "religious freedom…that we all enjoy here in America." Clearly, that religious freedom came to be defined by the practice of Christianity. Gingrich illustrated the point when he said, "Those Islamists and their apologists who argue for 'religious toleration' are arrogantly dishonest. They ignore the fact that more than 100 mosques already exist in New York City. Meanwhile, there are no churches or synagogues in all of Saudi Arabia. And they lecture us about tolerance." Gingrich added, "If the people behind the Cordoba House were serious about religious toleration, they would be imploring the Saudis, as fellow Muslims, to immediately open up Mecca to all and immediately announce their intention to allow non-Muslim houses of worship in the Kingdom" (Vu) (Gingrich "Contract on"). Geller demonstrated this affront to religious freedom when she referred to the dismissed renovation of a "95-year-old St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which stood at the base of the World Trade Center towers and was destroyed by Muslim terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001" (Geller "Ground Zero").

One contributor to the Huffington Post, however, challenged this line of reasoning by positing a different hypothetical: "Would Palin and Gingrich object to a YMCA on the same site? To a mega-church? To a synagogue?" (Newell). And Rauf sought to merge back together the religions recognized by the constitution by referring to the dogmas that permeate the major religions: "Cordoba House will be built on the two fundamental

commandments common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam: to love the Lord our creator with all of our hearts, minds, souls and strength; and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves" (Rauf). Bloomberg also rebutted the perceived attack on America's religious freedom. He said that in the early 1700s, Catholics were prohibited from practicing their religion and because of this, "the first Catholic parish in New York City was not established until the 1780s." As Catholicism had become normalized within American religio-civic identity, Bloomberg used the example of the church to turn the argument on its head, especially because the church was located "just one block north of the World Trade Center site, and one block south of the proposed mosque and community center" (Elliot "Michael Bloomberg").

As we saw early on, many people claimed that "[b]uilding the Ground Zero mosque is not an issue of religious freedom, but of resisting an effort to insult the victims of 9/11" (Peyser). However, the examples above reveal how various uses of analogies absorbed Christian American identity, including the right to practice (Christian) religious freedom, into the identity of Ground Zero, and that Park51 symbolized an offense to that identity. Thus, more than just an ironic slight of hand, analogical arguments provided a rhetorical means of offense, but that offense was highly charged with intention. The analogies used to project offense were not just composed adjectives but of verbs (e.g. "slap in the face"), creating a threat *in motion*, not unlike Burke's idea of attitude, which is pre-action: "We are ready to grasp the hammer before we reach it" (Burke *Grammar* 238). Perhaps this is seen most clearly in two separate comments from two local newspapers: "Not only is this a slap in the face and insult to all impacted by the terrorist attack of 9/11, but also is another example of Muslims attempting to subjugate

nonbelievers (infidels)" ("Rants & Raves"); "No rational person can doubt the intention behind the construction is a symbolic and subversive slap in the face of those murdered by Muslim terrorists, and all who care about them" ("Aug. 23").

The outcome of establishing the relationship between Ground Zero and Park51 this way would eventually lead rhetors to argue, through analogy, the prospect of engaging in battle. But before I explore that component of the Park51 controversy, I would like to give some attention to the discursive strategies that enriched and empowered the sacredness of Ground Zero, delineating the image of that sacredness so as to justify appropriate responses to particular acts of defilement, including justifications for war.

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE: COMPETING MONUMENTS

Rhetors needed to define the sacred nature of Ground Zero, not only because it is a memory that exists through rhetoric alone, but because its sacredness was still relatively young. To solidify its mantle as a space meriting significant protection, rhetors articulated its sacredness by comparing it to other hallowed spaces in America. One commenter made such a comparison, emphasizing the importance of age in the process. He said, "Ground Zero is sort of like the Alamo of the new age. It has almost, if not, achieved, the status of shrine" (Cafferty).

The importance of referring to Ground Zero in terms of its oldness, its legacy, its significance in American history, and as something that has sunk deep into our national memory seems at odds with Pierce's argument that the controversy rendered the attack as a recent present-day trauma. He observed statements like, "Feelings are still so raw on the issue" (Jacoby), and Park51 was reopening "what remains a deep wound" (Cillizza). Yet

the maturity of Ground Zero as hallowed ground and the freshness of 9/11 are not antithetical. The effort to "age" Ground Zero as to empower its sanctity while simultaneously making it an experience in the "now" reveals a fundamental purpose of national monuments—the summoning of a past memory into the present day. This paradox was managed by analogies, arguments that constructed the oldness and newness of Ground Zero by making comparisons to the familiar. Because Park51, rhetors argued, threatened the memory of 9/11 and Ground Zero's synecdochal symbolism of America and religious freedom, a three-way relationship emerged between Ground Zero, other national monuments, and Park51.

Ground Zero was defined as "a sacred graveyard" (Moore) and many individuals likened it to specific hallowed areas and cemeteries, especially Arlington. (Elliot "Gingrich aid"). Charlie Houser reflected, "I have always thought Ground Zero should be turned into a National Memorial Park, solemn just like Arlington National Cemetery, no buildings, just a quiet place to remember the victims and their families forever" (Harris). The desire for a "quiet place" not only detailed an important quality of an ideal memorial, but it also alluded to the ongoing turmoil surrounding the controversy and the possibility that that turmoil would continue as long as there was an "antagonizing" building to keep it going. Thus his reference to "no buildings" is telling. The prospect of constructing Park51 would remove Ground Zero from its sacredness. While there were dozens of buildings that surround Ground Zero, the comparison to Arlington cemetery renders any mention of "a building" to be an intruder, as Arlington's space is vast and open. Its status as a "National Memorial Park" would ensure that it would be protected from any local

oppositional efforts. Even though Park51 would be two blocks away and out of sight, its presence would distract from "[remembering] the victims and their families forever."

The other similarity Houser's analogy argued between Arlington and Ground Zero was that both graveyards were the result of war. Many voices rearticulated this sentiment. "Ground Zero is a war memorial, a burial ground. Respect it," one said (Peyser). To intensify the resonance of sacredness in Ground Zero, rhetors constructed a discourse around Park51's symbolism in relation to Ground Zero. In this context, Park51 would turn out to be a counter-monument, taking on a symbolism that defied the holiness of Ground Zero. One statement illustrates this sarcastically: "I like how we blame innocent American [M]uslims for 911. You would think that they were building a Bin Laden memorial" (Barlow).

Dichotomizing the two entities—Park51 and Ground Zero—was a matter of urgency, and claiming the old Burlington Coat Factory as part of the "sacred graveyard" was one way to demonstrate this. The warrant for this claim came from the fact that a piece of one of the planes in the WTC attack crashed through the roof of the abandoned building. Geller adamantly stated, "That building is a war memorial since part of one of the 9/11 airplanes crashed into it, causing severe damage. That makes the building a war memorial, no less than Gettysburg or Pearl Harbor" (Geller "The Man"). To use the building for anything outside of the deference given to other war memorials, including Ground Zero, would be a defilement. This is seen in Sam Nunberg's remark that opposed the removal of the airplane wreckage from the building: "It would be like removing the sunken ship in Pearl Harbor to erect a memorial to the Japanese kamikazes killed in the attack" (Margot). As such, Park51 became a *defiler* that already invaded the sacred space

of Ground Zero. Along with this encroachment, Park51's defilement came in a variety of forms.

One form was the building's projected size, not only as a structure in and of itself, but in relation to Ground Zero. "You honestly want a Mosque to tower over the WTC memorial?" one person asked. "What is that saying to the families and survivors of the terrorist attacks of 9/11?" (Prothero). A protester held a sign that read, "A Mosque at Ground Zero Spits on the Graves of 9/11 victims" ("Ground Zero's Boundaries"). The height of the building together with the project's identity as a mosque generated further motive to object:

> Why is the mosque going to be 13 stories tall? Sure, because real estate is so expensive that builders feel compelled to build skyward, but could it symbolically represent the [M]uslim religion overseeing and outshining the Ground Zero memorial? How many mosques are buil[t] that high anywhere else in the world? Let's see, well of the 5 middle eastern countries I have spent years in, I have never seen it! This is not a coincidence (Schwartz).

The idea that Park51 was "overseeing and outshining the Ground Zero memorial," along with the other descriptions of towering over and spitting on graves, added a further tension to Park51's threatening identity.

Besides size, another form constituting Park51 as defiler was the speed at which each "memorial" would be constructed. This idea is succinctly found in the phrase, "New Yorkers haven't even built a memorial to the victims yet" (Carey). Gingrich likewise reasoned, "We have not been able to rebuild the World Trade Center in nine years. Now

we are being told a 13 story, $100 million megamosque will be built *within a year* overlooking the site of the most devastating surprise attack in American history" (Vu). His measurement of time is important. Gingrich was in a sense evaluating the event-memorial ratio, the amount of time it takes between the moment a national atrocity happens and when that event becomes recognized officially as a memorial. Whatever the proper amount of time, Ground Zero's recognition had been long overdue, suggesting that both the state and even its citizens had failed to remember 9/11 adequately or had sold their values (for the price of $100 million no less) to an opposing monument. The evidence for this claim was the quickness by which the counter-monument would be built—within a year. Not only this, but the counter-monument would "[overlook] the site of the most devastating surprise attack in American history." The additional reference to American history was an extra reminder of the legacy sustained within our national narrative, one that recognizes sacrifices and honors them.

All of this debate happened before any remodeling efforts were made. Conscientious of this, one individual considered longevity in relation to the symbolism of national sacred spaces and monuments:

> Does anyone else think the fact that the WTC Memorial isn't even built yet is a factor here? Politicians and cable news celebrities are going to pick fights no matter what because that's just how it is these days. But I have to wonder, if the public was used to a memorial at Ground Zero honoring the victims of 9/11, perhaps then would they be more comfortable with a building a few blocks away that honors Islam? (Berkun).

If a bonafide Ground Zero memorial had become commonplace in the community, would that remove the threat that Park51 symbolically poses? Would the competition between the two monuments become obsolete? The question is not unworthy of reflection, but this debate was more than a battle against size, time, proximity, or expense. It was certainly more than a natural impulse in politicians and cable news celebrities to pick fights. Rhetors would continually claim analogical relationships between the two "monuments" and other major memorials. Ultimately, it was an argument about the sacred, and how the sacred is represented, measured, understood, and defiled.

Among the various analogies that depicted Ground Zero as a hallowed space and Park51 as a defiled space, one of the most prominent was Pearl Harbor. Unlike many of the arguments made by analogy, Richard Land, the president emeritus of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, provided a detailed explanation of the symbiotic relationship between Pearl Harbor and the Manhattan "monuments."

Both 9/11 and Pearl Harbor attacks, said Land, cost "approximately three thousand American lives [and] were premeditated attacks by enemies of the United States." They both "occurred on American soil, and not at some overseas site." While the amount of time that passed from 9/11 to the proposal for Park51 was nine years, Land made the point that "[e]ven sixty-nine years later, it would be unacceptable for most Americans to have a Japanese Shinto shrine within sight of *USS Arizona*." The proximity of the closest Shinto shrine to the USS *Arizona* is three miles, a choice, Land observes, that is based on principle: "Japanese-American followers of the Shinto religion have the right to have places of worship in close proximity to where they live. They do not, however, have the right to build a shrine right next to the *USS Arizona*." The American

sailors who perished at Pearl Harbor have made the site hallowed. "Similarly, Americans have overwhelmingly decided that Ground Zero is hallowed ground consecrated by the nearly three thousand people who died there."

Land emphasizes the similarities in each of the atrocities, the amount of time that has passed, the locations of the events, the means of consecration, and the proximity between holy and offensive sites. He then finalizes his argument, saying,

> While the overwhelming majority of Muslims—American and otherwise—repudiate the radical Islamic Jihadism of those who perpetrated the attack on the World Trade Center, it is still the case that it was done in the name of a perverted understanding of Islam. If those desiring the mosque truly are seeking greater interfaith understanding and reconciliation, they will hear the pain and concern expressed by their fellow Americans and will graciously agree to move their mosque two or three blocks farther away from Ground Zero.

While there are several points worth making here, what is of particular interest is the connection his analogy suggests between Japanese-Americans and "Muslims—American and otherwise." According to Land, even American citizens who practice Shintoism do not, by principle, do so near a site that received its sacredness by "American sailors who perished" there. This quickly creates a binary between the good and the bad, the martyr and the murderer, and allots an identity for each. Early on, he describes the attackers as the "enemies of the United States," but when talking about the deaths making the site hallowed, the deaths are spoken of in the passive voice, removing the enemy. But those who died were Americans (not Japanese), and therefore any

connection to a non-American individual, namely Japanese-Americans, simply "do not…have the right to build a shrine right next to the *USS Arizona*." Likewise, it was "approximately three thousand American lives" (not Muslims) who perished on 9/11, and "[w]hile the overwhelming majority of Muslims—American and otherwise—repudiate the radical Islamic Jihadism of those who perpetrated the attack on the World Trade Center," they do not have the right to insist building a mosque near Ground Zero (as if it were "only Muslims" who were insisting). Regardless of how "radical" the 9/11 terrorists were, their connection to Islam, however tacit, impeded their "right to build."

Demonstrating Ground Zero to be significantly sacred was crucial to the argument that Park51 should not be built. But, as we saw, that required rhetors to show how Park51 was a defilement to such sanctity, which it did in terms of size, time, proximity, and expense. However, these measurements of defilement were not enough. Rhetors would argue through analogies that Park51 was a declaration of war, and that the appropriate and necessary response for America was to engage in battle.

ANALOGICAL ACTIONS

The language used to project Ground Zero as a sacred memorial did more than that. Defining Ground Zero as a "sacred graveyard" and comparing it to Arlington, Pearl Harbor, and other spaces sanctified by "American[s]…who perished" is not just a circumscription of patriotism, sacrifice, memory, and death, but it is a focus on death itself. Associating Ground Zero with death was a way to explain the ground's symbolism in terms of a poignant, hallowed space which necessitated certain accommodations, but death also became a symbol of war. In other words, the building of Park51 catalyzed the precedent for war as it reopened "what remains a deep wound." The competing

"monuments" led rhetors to use war-like analogies, providing a conceptualization of the controversy as a war between nations and people.

An analogy that illustrated Ground Zero as something other than a memorial was a clear, defining statement that followed an enthymeme about offense: "People are being accused of being anti-Muslim and racist, but this is simply a matter of sensitivity. It's hard enough to go down to that pit of hell and death" (Hernande). In another example, the eulogistic form of the following description guides our attention toward the individual's act of reflecting.

> When I look at Ground Zero I think this was the last site of their life on earth that they had before they went to their death. And, it's just painful. I was lucky enough to see them a few days before [the terrorist attacks]… That was the last I saw of them. The pain of losing half your family just doesn't go away so when you come to this place and you think about it, it hurts ("Sacrificed Soldiers").

But reading against that form emphasizes death: "[going] to their death," "the last I saw of them," "losing half your family." Furthermore, death was the result of a terrorist attack, which not only caused death, but continues to cause pain to the living.

As Ground Zero and Park51 were rhetorically constructed as binaries, death, as represented by Ground Zero, was a counter-symbol to what Park51 would become: "this house of evil will be the birth place of the next terrorist event" (Sanchez). From the symbolic lens of Park51 as a birthplace, other analogies can be seen within a new frame of meaning. Geller said, "The monster mosque in what once was the shadow of the World Trade center is creating waves across the pond" (Geller "911 Mega"). "Waves

across the pond" could refer to the debate among interlocutors, but it also might suggest more serious repercussions, especially as the idiom comes after the description of the mosque operating within a shadow. A father of one of the victims of 9/11 explained, "I'm not a bigot. What I'm frightful about is, it's almost going to be another protest zone. A meeting place for radicals" (Peyser). Other descriptions held that Park51 would "be like a monument for terrorists…or a 'sacrilege on sacred ground'" (Cafferty). Fox News contributor Dick Morris stated that "these Sharia mosques…have become the command centers for terrorists," adding, "so this one would be, too" (Schwen). A more detailed illustration of symbolic action was presented in a Washington Times editorial:

> The mosque will cast a giant, dark shadow over Ground Zero, serving as a testament to the Islamist conquest of America. If Islamism can impose its will near the site of Sept. 11, then it can impose its will anywhere…For Islamists, erecting mosques on defeated territories is a sign of subjugation—the submission of infidels to Allah's rule (Kuhner).

One prominent analogy that spoke to Park51's symbolic insurrection was that of Nazism. Comparing the project's backers to Nazis, Gingrich exclaimed that "Nazis don't have the right to put up a sign next to the holocaust museum in Washington." A commenter agreed with Gringrich's comparison, exploring the similarities between the theme and phoros:

> Newt is right on the mark; radical [M]uslims have a long history of ties with the Nazis and in many ways share similar beliefs, namely racial/[ethnic] superiority, mass exterminations, formation of a Caliphate, etc. In fact in many ways fundamental Islamism is just another hateful

> "ism." Like Nazism, Communism, etc. [R]adical [I]slam will be defeated by Democratic forces. People just need to wake up and realize who these people are and what their goals are (Delong).

The Nazi analogy parallels the references to insurrection in that Nazis aren't static beings but are moving in tandem within a wider ideological force. They in a sense personify that movement. It is particularly effective as it connects to the war monuments of the past—beings from past wars that have lived on into the present maintaining the same ideologies that instigated battle before.

In light of this living, embodied ideology, Khan flipped the analogy around, comparing the opposition's animosity in similar form. "[I]t's not even Islamophobia," she claimed. "It's beyond Islamophobia." The step beyond Islamophobia, or the hatred or fear of Muslims, is aggressive action. She said the opposition feels "like a metastasized anti-Semitism." The word "metastasized" accentuates the living, growing force that opposing rhetors also sought to project, and "anti-Semitism" is particularly telling of how the opposers would fit a "Nazi" persona (Miller "Mosque Imam's").

Perhaps the most blatant argument used as a call for battle was a 60-second advertisement that NBC and CBS refused to air. Entitled "Kill the Ground Zero Mosque," it contains graphic depictions of the attack on September 11th, including a man falling to his death. It cuts between images of Islamic militants and planes crashing into the WTC ("NBC"). A narrator speaks over these images, saying

> On September 11th, they declared war against us. And to celebrate that murder of 3,000 Americans, they want to build a monstrous 13-story mosque at ground zero. This ground is sacred. Where we weep, they

> rejoice. That mosque is a monument to their victory and an invitation for war. A mosque at ground zero must not stand. The political class says nothing. The politicians are doing nothing to stop it. But we Americans will be heard. Join the fight to kill the Ground Zero mosque ("NRTPac").

The ad has received hundreds of thousands of hits on YouTube. While this is more literal than analogical, it substantiates the sentiment and rhetorical resonance that emanate from agonists' discourse, discourse that is not confined to "seedy" conspiracy websites or banned from television. It is found throughout the public sphere, across the political landscape by leading political figures and everyday citizens. It emerges in commonplace sites of discourse, namely major and local newspapers, blogs, speeches, and social networking sites. While the ad claims that "the political class says nothing" and "[t]he politicians are doing nothing," the numerous examples throughout this chapter show otherwise. Publics are indeed engaged in debate, fiercely concerned about the meaning of symbols. An editorial by the *Washington Times* said it concisely: "If the mosque is constructed, the terrorists win" (Schwen).

CONCLUSION

The anxiety over the building's meaning catalyzed a rhetorical battle over its identity which resulted in a swift and colorful means for creating that identity. Because humans are, as Burke reflected, "rotten with perfection" (Burke *Language* 16), the uncertainty over America's enemy together with a means by which agonists could fill that void propelled the controversy to its rapid escalation. The religious hinge, the either-or thinking that places religion in important but insufficient boxes misses the rhetorical movement within democratic communities if not for careful attention to particular

discursive strategies. The extent of citizenship is not merely to be mobilized by political campaigns or to wonder how much religion in the secular arena is appropriate. The purpose of this analysis was to provide a new way of considering the significance of religion in the public sphere, and do so through looking at rhetors' responses to the exigencies within religio-civic controversy.

While one might judge the analogical arguments of war as "only words," Jessica Enoch's study of Kenneth Burke reveals another perspective. Concerned with the aggressive campaigns and the potential for battle during the 1950s Cold War, Burke wrote "Linguistic Approaches to the Problems of Education" which "attempts to abate those aggressive and competitive traits in students that could eventually lead to global conflict." Enoch's interpretation of Burke's essay supports the justification for looking at religio-civic conflict through particular rhetorical strategies. The essay

> teaches students to become symbol-wise. Rather than being symbol-foolish and using language to compete and combat with each other on a daily basis, students…would adopt a "technique of preparatory withdrawal." This technique would prompt students to disengage from moments of aggressive argumentation and, instead, reflect upon the ways language contributes to such conflicts. Students would not sharpen competitive ambition in school but would "make methodical the attitude of patience"…It called students to adopt a reflective attitude that curbed those competitive "tendencies" that could cause "the kind of war now always threatening" (Enoch 273).

Burke's pedagogical program connects educational endeavors—to compete, to be successful, to get ahead—to the "patriotic fervor" (within a capitalist society) that leads to war. This competitive disposition is found in language itself, words that allow an individual to move upward or downward within a hierarchy. My analysis of the analogical arguments within the Park51 controversy is a demonstration of that rhetorical movement, one that leads rhetors toward a tragic potential of war.

In other words, analogical arguments do more than attribute identity to what something is (or should be), but they encompass the potential of repercussions and justify "necessary" actions. They point to something that is "other than it should be" in the present. They claim the relevancy of past actions or occurrences and, in doing so, qualify, in a certain moral light, past events that have bearing on a present circumstance.

Finally, this study reveals that there is an interdependent relationship between rhetoric, analogy, and religio-civic controversy. As rhetors, according to Burke, form terministic screens, there is a "terministic compulsion…the need to spin out the implications of our terministic compulsions as far as they will go" (Blankenship 132). Consequently, analogies are employed to accommodate that compulsion. In Jane Blankenship's reading of Burke, "the symbol user [the rhetor using an analogy] continues on as symbol constructor with ever more elaborate (and frequently self-confirming) constructions" (Blankenship 132). The religious actions of a non-Christian Other as seen in the attack on the Twin Towers and the construction and utilization of Park51 contrast against the backdrop of Christian religio-normativity in American society. Because of this contrast, as well as the unsteadiness that comes with their symbolic entities, analogical arguments were used to manage their meanings. The religious, sacred, and

symbolic nature of Ground Zero and Islamic worship, the terministic compulsion of rhetors, and the imperfect but nonetheless available resource of analogies all form a network of interdependence that provides a space for a plurality of voices to project variant meanings within a community.

CHAPTER 3

THE WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH: DIVERGENCE IN THE OVERARCHING ANALOGY "AMERICA IS GOD"

> "And [Jesus] said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?"
>
> —Mark 4:30

> "[Thirty years ago] students could still pray and read the Bible in school, abortion was illegal and 'gay rights' meant the right to be happy… The issue now is whether we will become our own god."
>
> —Cal Thomas, 1992.[1]

In the last chapter, we witnessed rhetors struggling within the civic public sphere to secure meaning for religious symbols and sacred spaces, and they turned to analogical arguments to accomplish this. We saw, in part, that the sacred is socially constructed and depends upon analogy to operate. That is, religion cannot live without analogy. But analogies are arguments, unstable metaphors that ask audiences to accept them as essentialistic modes of thinking in society's collective psyche. Rhetoric becomes religious when, as Burke noted, rhetors borrow words from the material realm to describe the supernatural realm. They then can be borrowed back to describe the material realm in new ways because of the implications gained from supernatural usages. In this chapter, we will look at the supernatural fingerprints that are reflected on a particular discursively-materialized entity, America.[2]

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[1] See David B. Haight, "Successful Living of Gospel Principles," *LDS.org*. Oct. 1992. Web. 8 June 2015. <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1992/10/successful-living-of-gospel-principles?lang=eng.>.

[2] Referring to Burke's theory of the "analogical" process of words could be misleading. The idea that pertains to the point I'm making is how rhetors use analogies to explain the supernatural, while Burke looks at the "analogizing" of words themselves. My purpose in using Burke is more to explain analogy as a process of borrowing and less at the level of how words

The previous chapter explored a wide variety of phores used to make claims about the theme; this chapter focuses on a single analogy—*America is God*—and the discursive efforts to preserve or redefine it. This singular focus highlights the power and complexity of this analogy as a conceptualization in which Americans widely participate.

Throughout the last couple of decades, the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) has gained notoriety in the media for protesting at a host of venues across the nation, especially military funerals. Central to their polemic is that America, a once pious and God-fearing nation, has become a backslidden and perfidious prodigal. One sin in particular—the tolerance for homosexuality—is a key qualifier for God's wrath upon a covenant people (Spies). While the media continues to chronicle Westboro's "obsession with homosexuality," I argue that the WBC's protests strike a peculiar nerve in our American piety that does more than illustrate our intolerance of scandalously bigoted language. The conflict between the WBC and, what I term, "traditional American patriots" is created by the divergent perspectives of what it means to honor and serve America, whether it is worshipping the God of America or worshipping the God that *is* America. This chapter draws upon the rhetorical concept of analogy to better understand the controversy regarding *America is God*. Taking an analogical approach, this study opens the possibilities through which we understand how long-held traditions in our often unconscious American piety are challenged and stretched. Here, we find rhetors, through analogy, demonstrating Olson and Goodnight's reflection of controversy's function, "[T]o block enthymematic associations and so disrupt the taken-for-granted realm of the uncontested and commonplace" (250).

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take on meaning. See Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1970), 7-8. Print.

Death, as a symbol, is the cumulative point of divergent perspectives in this case. What has been commonly held as a sanctified national sacrifice is suddenly challenged by Westboro, who defines a soldier's death as a sign of God's condemnation. The efforts and service that citizens render in behalf of the nation take the form of self-worshipping idolatry. Whereas the ceremonies and rituals that proceed the deaths of military men and women are seen by traditional patriots as noble, pious gestures, for Westboro, they are obscene displays of sacrilege:

> Military funerals have become pagan orgies of idolatrous blasphemy, where they pray to the dunghill gods of Sodom & play taps to a fallen fool… The Lord your God has you in His crosshairs. To deny us our First Amendment rights is to declare to the world that our soldiers are dying in vain, and that America is a nation of sodomite hypocrites. If you sign up to be a part of the military, you sign up to stand proud in God's crosshairs for the cause of fags and whores ("GOD HATES AMERICA").

The language Westboro uses is striking and offensive, and it has a purpose. This is something I will address later on. But if we can resist a knee-jerk reaction to such obscenities, we can gain, through studying conflicting voices, a wider perspective of how citizens experience America. By considering Westboro's point of view (and the opposition it generates), we will find that, more than just the targeting of gay citizens, Westboro's protests are concerned with what America *means* when it engages in its own civil religious rituals. I wish to reach that conclusion by carefully navigating particular components of this case, beginning with a discussion about the God that America worships. How does this *civil religion* come to be, and what does it look like? Next, to

better understand Westboro's opposition, I will provide a cursory history of the church, including the background of its founder, Fred Phelps. Following this, I examine the rhetorical process through which rhetors divide the WBC from traditional patriots, and then analyze how the different forms of American worship take place.

Ultimately, the WBC case shows controversy destabilizing longstanding truths relating to civil religious identities and ideologies. This case is controversial because the WBC argues *against* the analogical relationship between religion and America, or how Americans typically think of America religiously, and, in light of my objective for piercing the religious hinge, it takes us beyond the false choice of religion's harmful or healing hand on society. Here, we will witness rhetors drawing upon a religiously-conceived doxa of American identity and, within this civil religious society, seeking to preserve analogical *nomos*—meaningful order (Berger 19). The analogical battle over the WBC's right to protest is an argument about America's relationship to God.

ONE NATION, TWO GODS

One of the things gained by studying the Park51 controversy was an understanding of the powerful reality of the sacred in society. The sacred reflects "qualities of awesome and mysterious power," says Peter Berger, through secular representations. In this way, water becomes holy, words become forbidden, buildings become consecrated, and death becomes meaningful. But these transformations only happen through rhetoric. Through discourse, nomos gives society "meaningful order…by imposing differentiation and structure on the ongoing flux of experience." As "the sacred is apprehended as 'sticking out' from the normal routines of everyday life," the profane comprises the rest (Berger 25).

The briefest observation of American society yields a notable piety, a piety contained within dominant cultural ideologies. Robert Bellah called this civil religion, a "universalized" religion felt within a patriotic deference to the nation, "under God, indivisible." He defines it as "a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity." Civil religion is not specific enough to be Christian, or any particular religion, but it is specific enough to mobilize forms of "national religious self-understanding" (Bellah "Civil Religion" 6).

Americans believe that the nation is comprised of a chosen and peculiar people with a divinely appointed task of "work[ing] out a new and peculiar destiny" (Bellah "America as"). And while many rhetors in the civil public sphere will describe God as a being leading His country toward its divine end, Nation and Deity are ultimately one and the same. The God of civil religion is America itself, even "we the people." George Armstrong Kelly explained that Americans have "visualized the divine as a projection of the self-purifying ego" and have "gone to absurd lengths to equate divine intentions with national desires" (Kelly 247).

The belief in a god by worshipping the self is not a novel idea. For Emile Durkheim, it is the means by which religion comes into existence. In his observation of totemism, he found that a totem is a symbol that a clan uses to identify itself, a means to distinguish itself from other clans. But it is also the god that receives pious devotion from the clan. Says Durkheim,

> So if it is at once the symbol of the god and of the society, is that not because the god and the society are only one? How could the emblem of the group have been able to become the figure of this quasi-divinity, if the

> group and the divinity were two distinct realities? The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem (Durkheim 206).

In the U.S., citizens commonly turn to one such totem, the American flag, place their hand over their heart, and pledge their allegiance "to the flag" and "to the Republic for which it stands." Thus, the U.S. could be considered a nation that worships itself, that generates a God through revering the documents, symbols, traditions, and people that come to represent it.

The Great Seal of the nation carries the motto *E pluribus unum,* "From many, one." Michael Walzer believes "from" is a misleading preposition, claiming that America connotes a coexistence rather than *movement* toward a single entity (635). However, I find the preposition very telling of America's nature as a discursively-materialized entity. We can better understand how the totemic process takes place for us if we consider the role of rhetoric as a catalyst for movement. The formation of one body or substance from many is an act of identification. "Substance," Burke explains, "in the old philosophies, was an act; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*." Being separate, rhetors can affirm identification "with earnestness" and proclaim their unity. Not only is movement present in the American citizenry, but the earnestness to affirm unity speaks to that movement. As unity is affirmed, the identity Americans adopt also reflects the nature of the God that gave life to that American identity, a God who is invested in His people. In other words, being consubstantial leads to "the characteristic

invitation to rhetoric," and speaking leads to shaping an attitude about us and the God who made us (Burke *A Rhetoric* 21, 25). Christ explained the idea through prayer: "…I pray… for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one with us: *that the world may believe that thou has sent me*" (John 17:20-21, added emphasis).

The notion that *America is God* defines our civil religion, but such a concept, expressed openly, would be unsettling to Americans. Orators within the public sphere always speak of God's relationship *to* America. For example, while there were actual drafters of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that gave the nation certain rights and freedoms, contemporary rhetors are anxious to affirm that these "sacred documents" were authored by God, even written by God's own finger.[3] Chiseled into a panel in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, a temple-like structure in Washington D.C., are Jefferson's prophetic words, "God who gave us life gave us liberty." He then inquires, "Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a *conviction that these liberties are the gift of God*? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever" ("Quotations on"). Jefferson wants to be clear that it is God who endowed us with these liberties, not any other power, which includes the U.S. itself. Oftentimes, the totemism that masks our self-worship can be less overt. Our pledge is made "to the flag," but with the qualifier "under God." The dollar bill carries the image of George Washington, but reminds us that it is "IN GOD WE

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[3] I refer to Alexander Hamilton, who specifically said, "For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system, which, without the finger of *God,* never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests." Alexander Hamilton. "Popular Basis of Political Authority." *Essays on the Constitution of the United States, Published during Its Discussion by the People, 1787—1788*. Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. Brooklyn: Historical Printing Club, 1892. Web. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch2s13.html>.

TRUST." Self-worship ultimately occurs at a subconscious level, and God, Americans are taught, is always the composer of America's narrative.

From a slightly different perspective of civil religion, Brian Betz noted that according to Burke, "Religion is the binding of an individual or group to a principle which that individual or group perceives as greater than themselves and as a source of personal power which is measured by the intensity by which the individuals are bound to that principle." Burke named this source of power "the Ultimate." The Ultimate is experienced dichotomously, "[B]eing on the one hand 'totally other,' 'distant,' 'cloaked in mystery,' and 'enclosing the promise of the secret,' while on the other hand immanently 'present to the audience' who are courted by the 'reality of possibility' and by communion with a vision of the future" (Betz 28, 32). It is the simultaneous potential of what could be and the stark reality of being in the now, of imperfection. For Burke, the nation is always consubstantial, perceiving itself in its imperfection, but constantly seeing the possibility to be at one with "the Father."

The goal of transforming into or unifying oneself with the Ultimate is called transcendence. "As a strategy nurturing hope, it represents a means of coping which redeems the difficult present by giving the *now* a significance linked to a meaningful future" (Betz 29). Dwelling between the two states of the immediate and the ideal is like living in a corridor, and transcendence is the process by which one moves along the corridor, toward becoming one with the Ultimate.

These two ideas—totemism and transcendence—are not always mutually exclusive concepts. In the scripture above, totemism or self-worship begins by unifying individuals together, "that they all may be as one," and then transcendence moves the

group toward the Ultimate, "that they also may be one with us." The concepts likewise comprise the opening words to one of Barack Obama's most famous speeches: "We the people [totemism], in order to form a more perfect union [transcendence]" (Obama). However, these two ideas conflict within America's religio-civic identity. While seeking to become "a more perfect Union" is the heart of American patriotism, it would be unbelievable, even un-American, to be "a perfect Union." Sacvan Bercovitch explained,

> The American Puritan jeremiad was the ritual of a culture on an errand—which is to say, a culture based on a faith in process…The very concept of errand, after all, implied a state of *un*fulfillment. The future, though divinely assured, was never quite there…We do not really have to choose between the two worlds…We have access to both, providing that we embrace the realm of experience while giving priority, in rhetoric and imagination, to the realm of the idea. We live well in our "artificial world" insofar as we *acknowledge its distance from the higher Truth*—and having acknowledged this, devise a "virtuous expediency" that allows us to ignore the difference (23, 30 added emphasis).

Understanding totemism and transcendence prepares our minds for recognizing the dual ways American worship takes place. The natural tendency America has to totemically praise its own making allows Westboro to make condemnatory judgments about its patriotic, God-fearing practices and ceremonies, including military funerals. The sacrifice of a soldier all at once becomes, for Westboro, a sign of God's wrath. The ceremonial honoring of that sacrifice is suddenly an idolatrous sin. It is subsumed into an analogy of American worship, one that competes with its other symbolic resonance—a

national piety that follows Abraham Lincoln's oration: "to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live" (Lincoln "The Gettysburg"). Lincoln's declaration that "we have come" to do this, or that we have unified our efforts to serve this nation, through transcendence, is the other competing reflection of the *America is God* analogy. In the next section, I contextualize those competitive versions of the overarching analogy of *America is God* by setting the stage for the WBC's stark intervention into America's tradition of zealous patriotism.

"AN OUTGROWTH OF HIS DISATISFACTION": SOME BACKGROUND

Standing before 213 students at his high school graduation in 1946, Fred Phelps, the commencement speaker, stated, "The Four Freedoms must be shared and not just enjoyed" (Taschler and Fry). It was a reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech, delivered 5 years earlier, declaring that people everywhere ought to enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear (Roosevelt). Phelps' message could be viewed as a kind of preamble to the next 68 years of his life of fervently exemplifying and proselytizing the freedoms secured in the First Amendment.

An in-depth consideration of how Phelps' youthful speech echoed that of Roosevelt is not a trivial exercise. For example, understanding how Phelps came to lead the WBC's alleged 54,490 pickets[4] throughout the nation could be greatly informed by Roosevelt's speech, which spoke of a "threat" to America 6 times in the first 9 paragraphs. Given as a State of the Union address, "Four Freedoms" was a statement

[4] The number is displayed on the WBC's website as of February 16, 2015. Even though Fred Phelps died last year, he had been absent from picketing some time before that. I use the number of pickets to speak to the work the church has done (or claimed to have done) under Phelps' leadership. *God Hates Fags*. n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2015. <http://www.godhatesfags.com/?COLLCC=3420950753&>.

about the present vulnerability of the nation in the context of a world-wide attack on democracy. Eleven months after giving the speech, Roosevelt declared war on Japan.

Both orators were anxiously concerned with the state of the nation and sought to convince its citizens to engage in what Roosevelt called "change—in perpetual peaceful revolution—a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly adjusting itself to changing conditions…" Yet this change could only occur through the freedoms encapsulated in the First Amendment, through a "world order" of democracy that required the "cooperation of countries." Phelps, who titled his talk, "Our Heritage, Our Responsibility," would live up to that injunction. Like many self-proclaimed patriots, his piety to the nation was measured through the performance of his citizenship.

According to the myth of the chosen nation, which renders America as God's country preserved for those worthy of inheriting it, the original covenant-makers, comprised of early Puritans, initiated an enduring legacy adopted by subsequent generations. Implicit in the concept of the "chosen nation" is the expectation that God would continually bless America if citizens fulfill their end of the bargain, which includes national subservience. Because of Phelps' *heritage* as an American citizen, there was a tremendous *responsibility* to fulfill his national duty, which, much like Roosevelt, was the performance and propagation of democracy. Roosevelt would enact this propagation by calling for military action, leading, eventually, to an attack on Pearl Harbor amongst other acts of war. Phelps, on the other hand, became a lawyer and a preacher. His voice was the means through which he performed his responsibilities to America. Espousing the spirit of Roosevelt's words, which affirmed that "we oppose enforced isolation for ourselves," Phelps would prove his allegiance to a democratic America by defying those

who sought to "remove his voice" from the public sphere.[5] Indeed, Phelps lived by Roosevelt's ethic: "[W]e express our determination that the democratic cause shall prevail; and we strengthen the defense and the security of our own nation."

Upon graduation, Phelps prepared to enter the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. However, in the summer of 1947, he attended a revival in his home town of Meridian, Mississippi, where he "felt the call" that would change his path.

> [I] went to a little Methodist revival meeting and had what I think was an experience of grace, they call it down there. I felt the call, as they say, and it was powerful. The God of glory appeared. It doesn't mean a vision or anything, but it means an impulse on the heart, as the old preachers say (Taschler and Fry).

Switching his religious affiliation to Baptist, Phelps would enroll in Bob Jones University with the intent of becoming a preacher. He later moved to California and earned a two-year degree from John Muir College in Pasadena, California in 1951. That year, he began preaching to students about "the sins committed on campus by students and teachers." His fundamentalist protests became so notorious that *TIME* magazine did a story about him, recounting his reprimands against "promiscuous petting, evil language, profanity, cheating, teachers' filthy jokes in classrooms and pandering to the lusts of the flesh." On one occasion, a police officer removed him from the street for his own protection from a hostile crowd (Taschler and Fry).

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[5] Speaking of Phelps' death, one commenter said, "We do not cover ourselves with glory when we take pleasure in the death of anyone, although we can be relieved that Fred Phelps' voice has been silenced." This represented, in a subtle way, the broader national desire to remove Phelps' voice from the public sphere. Susan Reimer, "Is the death of Westboro Baptist leader Fred Phelps cause for celebration? [Commentary]." *The Baltimore Sun*. 21 March 2014. Web. 8 June 2015. <http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2014-03-21/news/bs-ed-reimer-fred-phelps-20140323_1_westboro-baptist-church-church-members-brendan-looney>.

Thereafter, Phelps married Marge Simms and moved to Toepeka, Kansas where, in 1955, he established the Westboro Baptist Church. The WBC, for many individuals, "is not affiliated with any mainstream strain of the Baptist faith," but it "is most aligned with Primitive Baptists, a much smaller, Scripture-based sect in which members believe they are selected by God to survive Judgment Day and their time on earth is meant to preach salvation" (Guarino).

But Phelps wouldn't confine his profession to preaching alone. In 1964, he earned his law degree from Washburn University School of Law in Topeka and, as one *CNN* article reported, became known in Topeka as a "brilliant civil rights attorney," noted for his work with African-Americans. In contrast to his later outspoken disdain toward homosexuality that earned him the title "the broker of hatred" (Taschler and Fry), Phelps "became the first lawyer blacks would call" in cases of discrimination. The year Phelps moved to Topeka was the same year the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation in public schools in the case of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education. The president of the NAACP Topeka branch, Reverend Ben Scott, explained that the Supreme Court ruling opened a lot of doors for civil rights suits. Phelps "made a fortune" as he took on a lot of the cases that a lot of other lawyers would not accept. "I don't know if he was cheaper or if he had a stick-to-it-ness," reflected Scott, "but Fred didn't lose many back then" (Blake).

Phelps' later protests against military funerals in decrying homosexuality seemed out of character to Scott along with others who knew Phelps. "I didn't even know he was a preacher," Scott said, never having heard Phelps talk about homosexuals during his work as a civil rights attorney. Joe Douglas Jr., an African-American activist in Topeka,

said of Phelps, "I don't know him anymore…I see him out there, and I hear the venom that comes out of his mouth. If you had asked me in the '60s if he would do this, I would have said never" (Blake). Phelps' daughter, Shirley Phelps-Roper, said that despite his upbringing in the Deep South during segregation, he never adopted the common racist beliefs "because of the mercy of God." Because he stood up for blacks, posited Phelps-Roper, people shot out the windows of their home, threatened her father, and on a number of occasions, she picked up the phone to hear a voice shouting "nigger lover" (Blake).

Eventually, Phelps would be disbarred in 1979 by the Kansas Supreme Court "after he became the subject of a complaint alleging witness badgering." But Phelps-Roper claimed the ruling was motivated by racism. "The state hated us for it," she contended. "They could hardly bring themselves to be civil because we won those verdicts." The court's official statement affirmed, "The seriousness of the present case coupled with his previous record leads this court to the conclusion that respondent has little regard for the ethics of his profession" (Blake). In 1989, he was accused of misconduct by nine federal judges, and he agreed thereafter to cease practicing law in federal courts as well. K. Ryan Jones, who made a documentary about Phelps, believed that when Phelps was disbarred, his "[addiction] to rage and anger" was redirected from the people he prosecuted to his religious ministry (Paulson).

Phelps' active picketing career reportedly began in June 1991, "as an outgrowth of his dissatisfaction with Topeka's response to his complaint that gay men were using a park near his home for 'indecent conduct'" (Paulson). Libby Phelps-Alvarez, a granddaughter of Phelps who has left the church, remembered that day as a turning point for the WBC.

> For being barely eight at the time, I remember the day well when my family discussed the possibility of picketing. I could tell a serious discussion was taking place by their hushed sounds, as they didn't want the children to hear exactly what was going on.
>
> Our first picket took place after a church service on a Sunday. We held placards with messages that were not on par with the more popular slogan, "God Hates Fags." The first sign Gramps made was later framed and hung inside the church's green office, named for its green carpet: "Watch Your Kids! Gays in Restrms."
>
> I was told Gramps wanted to clean up the park for him and his grandchildren to enjoy it. My family initially thought other churches would see the problem and come on board and help with the picketing. The opposite happened. They started preaching against the signs. So my family started picketing local churches regularly.
>
> From there, the church moved on to bigger venues, sending groups of picketers all over the United States. WBC's message eventually spread to just about every country in the world it's so easy, thanks to the Internet and relentless journalists who visit the church regularly and keep the world appraised of WBC's every move (Phelps-Alvarez).

Since that time, the running message of the WBC has not changed: "God still hates fags, God still hates fag enablers and any nation that embraces that sin as an 'innocent' lifestyle can expect to incur the wrath of God. Repent or Perish" (Paulson). The evidence of God's wrath on the nation's acceptance of homosexuality is its tragedies.

When death occurs, Westboro proclaims the justice of God upon a nation of sinners. They often announce their plans to protest on their website with an official flier or through twitter. The symbolic connection of military personnel to the nation is an important reason that the church commonly appears at military funerals, a reason I will expand upon later. But they have spoken out on and appeared at a number of other services and venues as well.

For example, Hurricane Katrina, considered by FEMA to be the "most catastrophic natural disaster in U.S. history," left 1,833 people dead and an estimated $108 billion in damages ("Hurricane Katrina"). In August of 2005, the WBC published a flier, stating, "Thank God for Katrina. New Orleans, symbol of America, seen for what it is: a putrid, toxic, stinking cesspool of fag fecal matter. Pray for more dead bodies floating on the fag-semen-rancid waters of New Orleans" ("Thank God"). In 2007, Westboro publicized their intentions to protest the funerals of the victims of the Virginia Tech Massacre, the "worst mass shooting in U.S. history," totaling 33 deaths. According to Phelps-Roper, "the student responsible for the shootings is in hell…but he was also fulfilling the word of God" (Miller "Group Plans"). Another example, the 2012 Sandy Hooks Elementary School shooting, that resulted in the death of 20 children and 8 adults, elicited a response from Phelps-Roper on Twitter that the WBC was planning to picket a vigil held for the victims. "[We plan] to sing praise to God for the glory of his work in executing his judgment" (Stenovec). Some of the staple messages that continue to ring throughout their protests include: "Thank God for 9/11," "Fags Are Worthy of Death," and "Pray for More Dead Kids."

The explicit language is shocking to say the least. It seems to contradict Phelps' early college-day reprimands against students and teachers' "evil language, profanity" and "filthy jokes." But Phelps and his congregants are purposeful in their profaneness, and this purpose is three-fold. First, it functions as a mirror, reflecting back to an audience a degree of the gravity of the crime committed by the audience. Normal Mailer illustrated this upon publishing his provocative 1968 novel *Armies of the Night*. The real crime, posited Mailer, was not his use of profanity, but America's barbarism in Vietnam: "the American corporation executive … was perfectly capable of burning unseen women and children in the Vietnamese jungles, yet felt a large displeasure and fairly final disapproval at the generous use of obscenity in literature and in public" (Yalkut 204). Thus, profanity becomes a heuristic device, tempting America to hypocritically reprimand offenses that pale in comparison to its own sins.

Second, it draws upon common albeit damaging tropes surrounding the gay community in general. Directing audiences' attention to lewd conceptualizations of homosexuality can generate more provocation by channeling sexual mores that are uncouth in the public eye. Strong, explicit, and offensive language is intertwined with the gay and lesbian identity, language that dominantly exploits the "deviant" sexual practices among men in particular.

Third, the provocative language is an invitation for traditional patriots to reorient themselves to what is sacred. Below, I chronicle the supreme court's support of the WBC's offensive protests in light of the First Amendment. As America elevates the Constitution to the level of sacred scripture, Westboro exposes the limitations of that sacredness by using it to protect their profane speech. Would God author a document that

protects such vile, crass, and impure discourse? When asked what gives the Westboro the right to protest at funerals, Shirley-Phelps responded by saying, "The first stinking amendment" (Crawford). These three purposes of the WBC's profanity reinforce the profane nature of America's condemnable self-worship. The WBC's style of delivering their polemic empowers the polemic itself.

The WBC has been involved in a number of law suits, the most popular being Snyder v. Phelps. In 2006, the WBC flew 1,000 miles to York, Pennsylvania to protest the funeral of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder who had been killed in Iraq. Among the protesters was "a 13-year-old girl with a blond ponytail who held a sign that said, 'Thank God for dead soldiers.'" For Al Snyder, the soldier's father, the experience was too much. *TIME* magazine reported that even four years later, "Snyder is still stuck on the day of Matt's funeral… Time passed, but the pain remained." In his own words, he relented,

> Every time I think of him, I think of these [assholes]… I have to think of the shock that was on my daughter's face when she saw the signs. I have to see the hurt in my dad's eyes when his grandson gets killed and then he has to go through this… To me, what they did was just as bad, if not worse, than if they had taken a gun and shot me. At least the wound would have healed (Gregory).

After experiencing debilitating depression, Snyder eventually sued Westboro for "intentional infliction of emotional distress." Snyder won the case and was granted $5 million, but two years later, in September 2009, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the verdict on account of the protesters' right to free speech. Those supporting

Snyder were even more outraged when the court ordered him to pay Westboro $16,510 in legal fees (Gregory).

But besides the Phelpses themselves, Snyder decried widespread media organizations' support of the church's free-speech claims. "Most of these people have never served in the military, have never lost a child at war," he said. "And *none* of them, not *one* of them, has *ever* had to put up with the Phelpses at one of their children's funerals. You come back and tell me this is freedom of speech after they do this to *your* kid" (Gregory).

The Fourth Circuit pointed to two categories of speech that are protected by the First Amendment in matters of public concern, even when targeting private citizens.

> First are statements that fail to contain a "provably false factual connotation." The Westboro signs were hurtful and wildly inappropriate—"God hates you," for example—but you can't disprove God's hate.

The other category protected by the First Amendment that the appellate court cited covers statements that employ "loose, figurative and hyperbolic language." So the more abstract and outlandish the statement—"God hates the U.S.A."—the less likely it is that a reader will believe it. The Fourth Circuit also held that since Westboro's signs were related, however loosely, to issues like religion, gays in the military and the Iraq war, they were of public concern and thus protected by the First Amendment (Gregory).

On March 2, 2011, the Supreme Court voted 8-1 in support of the WBC, dismissing Snyder's attempt to appeal the Fourth Circuit's decision. In this ruling, the majority opinion, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, reasoned that the case "turns largely on whether that speech is of public or private concern… The 'content' of

Westboro's signs plainly relates to broad issues of interest to society at large, rather than matters of 'purely private concern'" (Chappell).

The Court's decision further polarized those who believed that freedom of speech was too valuable to give up at the expense of what others considered unforgivably offensive. In one counter-protest, a high school principle explained, "We don't agree with them, but they're still human beings and they have a right to speak their mind" (Kennedy "Wilson"). On the contrary, some spoke in support of freedom of speech, but questioned whether the WBC's discourse counted as such. As one person said, "I am disgusted with this ruling. I support the first amendment completely, and I support expression of dissenting opinions. But this evil display of emotions against our Military who sacrifice so much to protect us from harm is beyond free speech" (O'Keefe).

I will pause briefly to recognize where the mapping of this controversy has taken us. This case, just as in the case concerning Park51, has quickly (and inevitably) been reduced to the religious hinge, a binary that reduces our thinking of religion in the public sphere to a legal question. "Should the protests of Westboro Baptist Church be protected under the First Amendment?" This was a topic posted on Debate.org, compelling rhetors to side with one side or the other. And respondents answered accordingly. What is gained from this dialectic is the answer to a straightforward question: 42% say yes and 58% say no ("Should the protests"). Yet it is not only this website that flattens our thinking in considering the legal line between religion and speech or public and private. Bruner and Balter-Reitz have provided an important yet hinge-inducing critical analysis of, in the case of Synder v. Phelps, the Supreme Court's logic in protecting "'artificial persons' before the rights of real persons." They call for a reassessment of the Court continually

making "legal protections for blatantly deceptive political speech in the United States" (Bruner and Balter-Reitz 652). Their approach to the case was more legally-focused and less religiously interested. Still, as important as their approach is, it reinforces the trained incapacity through which we are allowed to understand religio-civic controversy. The case of Westboro becomes nothing more than a question of legal line-drawing. I would encourage scholars and citizens to recognize how people talk about religion in the public sphere, and how viewing disagreement rhetorically can reveal many more insights into the way people value and engage in our pluralistic society. Besides the law and philosophy taking precedence in such matters, I believe that placing rhetoric at the center of our inquiry allows a more comprehensive and even truthful depiction of American communities.

In the next section, I describe the stakeholders invested in defining American worship—the WBC and traditional patriots—and how they begin the process of moving themselves from the material realm, as we recall from Burke, and adopt a symbolic identity that works within a supernatural realm. Specifically, my observation of these symbolic identities initiates the analysis of how rhetors disputed the analogy of *America is God*.

UNIFYING TOGETHER AGAINST EVIL

The disparity between the claims about America's identity intensified through a process of identification and division. Othering the WBC from the rest of the U.S. allowed the nation to recognize itself as a homogenous socio-political unit. A *Huffington Post* article titled "A Nation United Against Westboro" spoke of a "unified rejection of the group's incendiary rhetoric and abrasive, hateful demonstrations" ("A Nation").

"There appears," one person observed, "to be universal agreement that WBC is a hateful, twisted, disgraceful group with no redeeming qualities" (Fullhart). "Hate" was not only a common adjective for rhetors describing the WBC, but it was a term that many requested to be nationally and officially attached to the church. A petition was sent to the Obama Administration calling for the government to legally recognize the WBC as a hate group ("Legally recognize"). The petition received over 367,000 signatures, the most popular White House petition of all time, nearly doubling the previous record which was a call for federal action on gun control (Wing "White"). The White House responded by saying it "was the prerogative of private organizations like the Anti-Defamation League" to create such labels, but it mentioned that the petition reflects "how strong the bonds that unite us can be" and called the WBC's protests "reprehensible." "Together," it said, "we're more resilient than those who would try to drive us apart" ("White House").

Both the White House statement and the *Huffington Post* article gave reason to reject the WBC from the rest of society. "The actions of the Kansas-based" church would eventually "drive us apart" if not for a "unified rejection." In other words, the way to avoid national fracturing was by encouraging America "to largely put aside personal differences" (even in the midst of the 2012 presidential campaign that was "frequently marked by division and polarized political conflict"). This meant finding commonalities between dissonant subgroups in America, and tolerance was the foremost of these characteristics. The "coming together" of a pluralistic nation rendered the U.S. as a loving and accepting nation; it would only reject those who demonstrated the level of intolerance exerted by the WBC. Moreover, because of the good-bad dichotomy that

saturated the U.S.-WBC relationship, colloquially labeling the WBC as a hate group would in turn define the U.S. as a symbol of love.

Tolerance, or the harmonization of traditionally polarized political groups in America, emerged continually throughout public discourse. Some were awestruck by the formation of this new societal alliance.

> Is it possible left and right, and even the middle, agree that the Westboro bigots and hate-mongers are appalling…? Didn't we just come out of a national "debate" over health insurance for all Americans, with various tea-baggers and other overwrought "patriots," some of them armed, presenting images of Barack Obama as Hitler? Didn't some protestors, aligned with the extreme right, ridicule an openly gay congressman, and a man with Parkinson's disease? Didn't 10 Democratic members of Congress report death threats after they voted to extend health insurance to 32 million Americans? …Maybe it's easy to agree on this one, but sometimes agreement across the great American cultural divide is good (Rodricks).

The commenter used multiple questions to emphasize a singular point—the relinquishment of individual difference for the common good—projecting a baffling, yet pleasant sentiment.

Besides focusing on the nation's own common assent, the antidote to the political variance of America was the procurement of a common enemy. That procurement was achieved through the discursive labeling and positioning of the WBC *against* America, not just politically but across cultural and religious divides. Said one rhetor,

> These groups are universally despised. The WBC has 40 members, almost all of whom are related. They are only famous due to their despicable tactics. Everywhere they go, they are met with counter-protests. The opposition is a beautiful mix of Christians, atheists, conservatives, liberals, and people from every walk of life. There is a motorcycle group called the Patriot Guard Riders who act as shields between the WBC and the funerals they picket. The only good thing about the WBC is how much they unify everyone against them ("Is it true").

Specifying the number of the WBC provides another way to judge the situation, to belong to a group that includes most people as opposed to the 40 "despicable." The description of WBC's number as "almost all of whom are related" invokes the idea of an incestual relationship and reinforces the strangeness of that family's eccentric culture.

Furthermore rhetors spoke directly to the WBC, illustrating how in marginalizing themselves, they've helped bridge the divides between peoples within the nation.

> [Y]ou, WBC, you are a different issue altogether. Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, the religious and the irreligious have all come together in the past to propose legislation to keep you out of parks and away from funerals. They have shown up at your protests and have lobbed items at you in anger. They've even chased you all the way to the highest court in the land. You test their freedom. You make them uncomfortable. You do what nearly nothing else can do in this country (Slayback).

The message is that the WBC has achieved the unachievable—bringing the U.S. together in one unified body. There is a subtle air of triumph in this point, that not only was this singleness of heart successfully acquired, but that heart beats to a kind of rhythmic, national victory. How this patriotic pulse connects to the analogy of *America is God* will be explained later on. Suffice it to say, challenging the WBC presents an opportunity for Americans *to be American*, to perform their national deference by, as one person said, "showing solidarity…regardless of your political beliefs, religion, gender, sexuality, or race, you can all unify together against evil" ("Westboro Baptist Church Marine").

Making the WBC symbolically vulnerable, as a thing with a great degree of interpretive potential, encouraged rhetors to use analogies to their advantage. "These folks," said one person,

> are the sickest souls on the planet....they are like parasites who want to suck the life out of everything that is holy on this [magical] sacred earth.... you have to pity them because they have crawled up their own asses and died up there....reading their bibles.... thinking like infants that they have the answer that everyone should follow..... their worlds will come crashing down around them some day and they won't understand why (Schilling).

Similar to an infectious parasite, Brad Paisley compared them to brown recluse spiders and referred to the difficulty of quashing them from the public arena. "You can't really scare them off," he said. "They are just there" (Alexander).

The threat of infecting the body was just as much a reference to a national body as it was human. One commenter said the "WBC are like Al Qaida. They are not really a physical threat, but they do influence like minded people, and attacking them just

reinforces (to the like minded people) that the majority hates and dislikes them, which makes them more respectable" (Takeuchi). The looming physical and ideological threat of the WBC oftentimes received responses that projected them as weak (as one might degrade an opponent). They were something the U.S. could handle, but an annoyance whose colorful protests the country was required to constantly endure. "You know who makes homemade signs?" One citizen asked. "Cheerleaders. These guys are like cheerleaders for stupidity" ("Westboro Baptist Church *CRACKED*").

Looking at America in a strictly secular or legal light would reveal only half the story, not to mention ignore the important voices that are engaged in battle over American identity. Identification and division comprised the first step in a process of elevating each entity to a symbolic representation, as we saw in this section. But I would momentarily highlight something else happening between the voices we have examined thus far. We have just *heard* rhetors, through their voice, *journeying* onward in their American errand of becoming "we the people," "that they all may be one." Recall that "the only good thing about the WBC is how much they unify everyone against them." This growing together "in order to form a more perfect union" is made possible by the WBC as "they test our freedom." The symbolic unification allows America to *transcend* toward the Ultimate, and unification is achieved through the analogical relationship America has to the divine. While this form of American worship was performed through transcendence, the WBC would interpret that unification as self-worship. In turn, citizens would spur a communal effort to silence the WBC for their anti-American polemics, one blogger describing it as "a form of blasphemy" (Boyle). We, ourselves, now journey to see how that analogical conflict creates friction between Westboro and America.

DIVERGENCE IN "AMERICA IS GOD"

Michael Novak has said that "a state is not solely a pragmatic, administrative agency. It is also, necessarily, a symbolic agency" (302). This is why Michael Walzer can declare, "There is no country called America" (633) and, more broadly, why Mary Stuckey can deduce,

> Nations, are, of course, fictions. Of the myriad ways in which human communities could organize themselves, nothing makes the "nation" inevitable. Nations are, in fact, brought about by specific sorts of political and rhetorical actions. Once invented, however, nations require certain elements for their sustenance and growth, and a certain sort of language with which to maintain and perpetuate themselves. Nation building thus relies upon metonymy (641).

For centuries, rhetors have appropriated a host of analogies to America as a body that exists in time and space. Using comparisons provides a way for rhetors to make conceptual leaps into unfamiliar territory. Thus, to understand one's own existence within and relationship to America in the context of its past, present, and future, rhetors construct analogies as symbolic points of reference that fill in gaps that otherwise suggest meaninglessness. Oftentimes, these gaps are filled in permanently.

Lincoln once compared America to a house, warning that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (Lincoln "House Divided"). Of course he was referencing a New Testament rebuttal Jesus offered to his critics; it was an effective move as the ethotic resonance did more for Lincoln's statement than provide a line of reasoning. Naturally, Westboro uses scriptures in reprimanding the nation. This helps solidify their

arguments, both in terms of logic and as a resource of authority. For example, just as Lincoln used scripture to compare America to a house, Westboro, in one of their fliers, quotes Psalms 127:1, almost as a kind of response to Lincoln's analogy: "Except the Lord build the house, They labor in vain that build it; Except the Lord keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain." So even if the occupants of the house in Jesus' scripture manage to get along, just as they did for Lincoln, according to the WBC, the current occupants are still in danger of God's judgment even while working together. The WBC's argument properly enacts their view of American self-worship, that regardless of the efforts to build, including citizens offering their lives, serving the nation has become a form of idolatry ("GOD HATES").

The anxieties caused by Westboro upon a pious nation emerged from many voices. These voices were eager to defend America, and as they did so, they co-constructed America's identity into a form of American worship that rivaled that of the WBC. One rhetor explained that the WBC was motivated by self-serving reasons (much like the church's argument against America) to protest at military funerals "where a brave soldier made the ultimate sacrifice for his /her country… The loons at Westboro…are about [themselves], the publicity and law suits, not God, honor, or country" ("George Vogel"). One might say that American voices opposing the church sought to match the zealousness demonstrated by Westboro as they attacked America, as seen here: "I say we also ensure that there is a massive US Flag at any event where WBC Wackos may be- Hold the flag up and let the Wackos see nothing but Flag. Obtain Unidirectional speakers- aim them right at WBC Wackos- and play Star Spangled Banner on full blast" ("Veteran Tackles). The anxiousness in these voices is clearly evident in how they seek

to make judgments about Westboro's blasphemous acts or how they desire to unleash the virtuous and unforgiving power of American patriotism upon a sacrilegious church.

Yet it was exactly this form of American patriotism that the WBC opposed. They reasoned that if God loved America so much, why was he causing so much disaster upon the nation? In the excerpt below, the WBC connects the cause of national destruction to America's sin of self-worship:

> The Columbia scattered all over Texas is a curse! The Tsunami is a curse! Your children shooting each other in the schools is a curse! A child coming home dead from the battle is a curse! Katrina (the whirlwind) is a curse! The US Supreme Court, blindly demanding that the people of this nation give respect to filthy beasts, when God has said they are an abomination, is a curse! This nation is cursed by God and we are doing [our] duty to warn you that if you will repent and turn from your evil ways—from worshiping the words of your own hands and worshiping that flag and the military and dead bodies ...and stop being filthy, murdering...whores...then God will repent of the evil that he has purposed against you! ("Westboro Baptist Church *Anti*").

Their conviction of God's judgment upon the nation was just as firm as the American patriotism expressed by "devout Americans," and clearly, each side was viewing the opposing message from different angles. Being a "good" citizen, demonstrating love, proving the others' moral wrongness, these began from a space of serving God and country, and were conceptualized within different (civil) religious orientations.

The translational efforts by the WBC to interpret the nation's calamities constructed the identity of the messenger as much as it did the nation. In their own words, "We aren't anti-war protestors; we aren't anti-don't-ask-don't-tell protestors; we're the prophets of God." In the process of making arguments about the meaning of American deaths, Westboro demonstrated a particular ethos that spoke to their ability to communicate with Divinity. Prophets aren't just "holy men" who begin speaking to anyone. They come forth at a particular time, for a particular purpose, in order to speak to a particular people. The WBC claimed to be prophets sent to America. Referring to the Iraq War, they said,

> This war had to happen; Bush has to be persuaded to stay in this war; America had to become Babylon. This is the means by which, God is punishing America, and nothing is going to change that fact. We're going to stay on message....You don't define us; our duty to God does. Whether it's by hurricane, IED, terrorists, or other means, God is punishing this nation. He has become an active enemy fighting against America. That is our message ("Westboro Baptist Church *Anti*").

Similarly, within the construct of civil religion, there is a prophet for the American nation. Novak explains, "Every four years, Americans elect a king—but not only a king, also a high priest and a prophet. It does not matter that we are a practical and sophisticated people, no longer (we think) influenced by symbols, myths, or rituals. To what our president represents, we react with passion" (3). Within the *America is God* analogy, citizens respect the officially-recognized "shaman" who carries the mantle bestowed upon him.

With the WBC's claim on prophetic authority came the knee-jerk defense of Americans' own spiritual commander-in-chief. The often "unconscious" piety toward God's messenger, the president, emerged in citizens' discourse as the WBC became a kind of competing prophet. One citizen asked them directly, "Does the WBC still maintain that President Obama is the antichrist - the beast talked of in the Book of Revelations? And is Pope Benedict XVI the False Prophet?" "Indeed!" they affirmed. It is not coincidental that the rhetor asked about both Obama and the Pope, two spiritual messengers, in the same breath. Furthermore, directing a letter to "The President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada," a petitioner against Westboro wrote,

> As citizens of your countries , we all have the right to voice our opinions. The Westboro Baptist Church, a community widely know as a hate group, has gone too far with voicing their opinions about what they believe is right and wrong… The Westboro Baptist community protests their hate against homosexuality, troops, Obama, and America itself in the most extreme and degrading fashion (Baxter).

The way the letter begins, "As citizens of your countries," is stylistically resonant of subjects kneeling before a king or spiritual leader. A significant reason the petitioner makes to officially label Westboro as a hate group is that Obama, amongst other tokens of American sacredness, has been degraded. Others would directly challenge the WBC's claim as God's messengers: "They are a cult because they say they speak for God and they do not -- they are false prophets" ("Westboro Baptist Church is a").

The degradation of America was more than a group of people using their free speech. It was act of defilement. That defilement had certain eternal consequences that

would come to pass through the justice of God. "Do not worry," one reassuring commenter said. "One day the members of the Westboro Baptist Church will be witness to God's law. Guess what Westboro Baptist members, you are in for an eternal damnation of a lot more than pepper spray" (Vogel). God, in this example, would clearly not stand for how Westboro has abused the American covenant. They've turned their backs on the nation. But Westboro submitted themselves as the final judge on what was pure and impure. Referring to a specific Mexican Catholic Church, they exclaimed, "There is a difference between the sense of the sacred…and the goofy 'communal sensitivity' at Topeka's sodomite Mexican Catholic Church…Mexican idolaters worship bloody rectums…" ("Westboro Baptist Church *Anti*"). It was that claim to authoritatively discern the sacred from the profane that enabled the WBC to tell America it was going "to hell in a 'faggot's hand basket'" (Phelps-Alvarez).

The divergent perspectives of who America worships and what that means is the analogical lens, broadly conceived, through which the controversy of the Westboro Baptist Church plays out. Some of the components of that analogy were recognized in this section, including the nature of the American nation and where its citizens fall eschatologically. The stasis, maintaining on the one side that America worships God, and on the other, that America worships itself, is demonstrated very clearly in an exchange between Shirley Phelps-Roper and Alan Colmes on the *Hannity & Colmes* show: "Why don't you just obey?" asked Phelps-Roper. "Who should I obey?" replied Colmes. "Who would you like me to obey?" "The Lord your God," she said, who "brings his wrath down upon" the heads of Americans… "a raging mad God, described so angry as having smoke coming out of his nose and fire coming out of his mouth. That's your god."

Colmes, opposed to this description, stated, "I answer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." "How dare you," exclaimed Phelps-Roper, "invoke the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then flip him off, refusing to obey and behave yourself" (SuperBattleDog). Considering this exchange within an analogical paradigm can more easily provide us a grounding for such a disagreement. It widens the possibilities through which we see citizens experiencing America. America, as Novak explained at the beginning of this section, is a symbolic agency," and embracing that symbolism as a reality through which religious citizens speak and live in society opens up our potential to understand religio-civic communities. The next section analyzes the analogy of *America is God* in terms of military death as sacrifice.

NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS

Through civil religion, national allegiance is offered in behalf of the American promise—"the land of the free"—by being "brave" for the country. Citizens' bravery is constantly tested. They go to war to protect the nation, will kill for the nation, will die for the nation, and do so because "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty." Carolyn Marvin provides clearer insight into why the nation has seen so many sacrificed lives on its behalf:

> Civil religion is the dominant partner in any contest between national and sectarian power. At least, this is the case wherever the group as a whole grants the nation the final power to decide which citizens will be sacrificed and when. To sustain itself as the embodiment of unassailable truth, the nation calls for citizen sacrifice. The discourses that support this claim may fairly be called religious rhetoric, but their moral authenticity rests on

> a foundation of past blood offerings. These are enlisted to create a willingness to offer more blood in the future (23-24).

It is for this reason that we not only accept but find solace in Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," words that hundreds of thousands of elementary students have memorized:

> It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth" ("The Gettysburg").

Lincoln, just as with other presidents, redefined the tragedy of death within the sacred notion of sacrifice, encouraging his audience to refuse the possibility that their deaths were meaningless, and providing a way for their deaths to be meaningful: they happened for America.

However, the WBC disrupts that tradition of belief in the minds of most citizens. This controversy shows us that there is a conflict behind the meaning of death, of a fallen soldier as a sanctified national sacrifice or a sign of God's condemnation. Death, as an opportunity for consolation and peaceful reflection, can be underscored by the bitterness of finality itself, and the WBC highlights that finality and does so as an impersonal token of God's justice. They define the meaning of death as an indication of retribution, highlighting the quantity of God's "kills." On the WBC's official website, there is a

running tally of the number of "soldiers God has killed in Iraq and Afghanistan," and the number of "people that God has cast into hell since you loaded this page" (*God Hates)*.

For most Americans, funerals are ceremonial rituals, a *celebration* of a life and an occasion for people to come together to pay respect and show support to loved ones. In the context of the civil-religious identity, military funerals become even more imbued with a sacrosanctity, where death's resonance extends to a much wider scope of possible meanings. Civil religion is seen most clearly in military funerals as God and country are bound together as one. For example, in a eulogy for one military soldier, it says, "Staff Sgt. Jason Rogers came home Thursday, April 14 2011, his body borne upon a sea of waving American flags and hands held tightly in salute for the Brandon, MS Marine killed in Afghanistan earlier this month" ("Westboro Baptist Church hunting"). This description transposes the symbol of the American spirit—the flag—with an ascension into heaven. It is something like Arlington cemetery, its fields of headstones accompanied with "seas" of American flags covering the bodies of martyred soldiers. I use the term "martyr" intentionally. A dictionary first defines martyr as "a person who willingly suffers death rather than renounce his or her religion." Of course, a secondary definition refers to one suffering or dying "on behalf of any belief, principle, or cause" ("Martyr"). Within the paradigm of civil religion, martyrdom is first and foremost a religious-based sacrifice, or, in the words of many rhetors, the "ultimate sacrifice." It is this ultimate sacrifice that I will examine in this section, and Westboro's counterclaim that death represents a fallen nation.

Covering the Snyder v. Phelps decision, *TIME* contributor Sean Gregory reflected upon the significance of Westboro protesting military funerals.

> Military funerals not only warrant that right [of mourners to mourn] but carry the added weight of mourning troops' ultimate sacrifice for their country… [T]he Phelpses have chosen to target military funerals in particular to draw the most attention, make the greatest impact and, in the process, cause the deepest wound as they celebrate death as if it were a sporting event. The Phelpses have developed a special brand of what 49 attorneys general call "psychological terrorism."

There are a few notable points in this passage. First, it identifies military funerals as carrying an "added weight." They are distinguished from perhaps more common but even sacred types of ceremonies. Because of this added weight, mourners have a greater vulnerability to experience tragedy; they receive the "deepest wound." Second, the passage is cognizant that Westboro seeks to send a message by choosing military funerals. Protesting at these kinds of funerals would "draw the most attention," but Gregory doesn't state why. This suggests that Americans are wrapped together in this orientation of sacrosanctity, even unconsciously, and citizens would naturally find protests offensive. Finally, the "psychological terrorism" mentioned at the end renders Westboro as terrorists. They become the literal counterpart to the military personnel, and only someone as audacious, calculating, and cold-hearted as a terrorist would consider "attacking" this kind of venue; Gregory actually uses this analogy: "celebrate death as if it were a sporting event" (Gregory).

Rhetors commonly referred to the deaths of military men and women as "the ultimate sacrifice." After the WBC announced their plans to protest the funeral of Sgt. Michael Guillory, the city issued a statement, "We ask that our citizens not engage in any

way with any demonstrators so that Sgt. Guillory's funeral is a peaceful and respectful opportunity to honor him for the ultimate sacrifice in his service to our country" ("Westboro Baptist Church announces"). Funerals, then, function as opportunities for Americans to give honor to those who pay the ultimate sacrifice. And they also can further imbue specific meaning to the solider.

For example, responding to another WBC protest, one commenter said, "May God keep Staff Sgt. Michael Bock safe and blessed in his flock. I am humbled by his and all of our proud warriors' sacrifice for the United States of America" (Vogel). The description "warriors' sacrifice" maintains certain inferences to the battle in which the soldiers were engaged. Through a civil religious lens, the battle takes on a moral significance, not just between nations, but between good and evil. Military personnel, or warriors, engage in these kinds of cosmic missions for the nation, and their sacrifices have eternal consequences. Thus, when the WBC protests seek, in the minds of citizens, to defy the principles upon which that sacrifice was made, they become adversaries in the fight for righteousness. This in turn shapes the way Americans see and respond to their protests. Commenter Mary Elizabeth articulated the supernatural implications of a warrior sacrificing his or her life for America.

> When the Savior returns, He will not be a servant, He will be a warrior King of Kings and Lord of Lords who avenges the death of the innocent and destroys the enemy of Israel. With Him come the armies of heaven. Who is in His army? Those who hear His call to lay down their life for their friends… Because He knows that those willing to sacrifice something for others is doing what He did, He explained it like this, "Greater love has

> no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15) So, when someone serves and dies for others, not for themselves or any reward, they are listening to the Son and the Father, hearing the call to live accordingly ("Soldier Protects").

Christ, the "warrior King," as Elizabeth described, is the Ultimate Solider who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Using the adjective "ultimate" to describe a military soldier's sacrifice forges him or her in the image of God. Pursuing this thought further, in the same New Testament chapter that Elizabeth referenced, we find Christ's admonition to his disciples: "Abide in me, and I in you… I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:4-5). Continuing the conflation of the divine and the secular, the fruit, in this instance, is the service rendered to the American nation. Notice that "abiding in [Christ] and I in him" speaks to the nature of transcendence, the substance of Americans' perceived sense of worship, to ultimately be one with God. Thus those who offer up their own lives for the country are fulfilling the definitive way a citizen can perform such worship.

The rest of citizens, while not providing the ultimate sacrifice, are called to honor those who do. If anyone tries to defy these sacred soldiers and the meaning that shines from their sacrifices, citizens must step up and protect them. "It is our duty," Illinois Governor Pat Quinn stated, "to honor their sacrifice by ensuring they are remembered with respect and solemnity" (Koonse).

How does one do this? Faced with the dilemma of the incessant protests from the WBC, one person reasoned, "The only thing we can do is out number them, be louder

than they are and block them so the poor families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice do not see their disgusting display" ("Veteran Tackles").

Others had more forceful measures in mind.

> [M]aybe if we just start beating you freaks asses every time you disrespect another human being and their family you will stay away. Even dogs learn to stop doing what causes them repeated pain. Might take a few ass beatings and incarcerations and cost judicial backlogs and lawsuits. But so what sometimes it takes risk and penalty for the right reasons. Just look at our founding fathers, or even Christ himself ("Soldier Protects").

Another blogger related an incident posted on an "Ole Miss sports message board" to illustrate a worthy protocol for handling the protests. Days before the WBC arrived to protest at Sgt. Jason Rogers' funeral, mentioned earlier, one WBC member appeared at a local gas station and "ran his mouth… and got his arse waxed." After the police arrived, they attempted to question the victim who "could not give much of a description of who beat him." The police then interviewed witnesses who saw the incident, but "no one seemed to remember anything about what had happened." The blogger then added this conclusion:

> Rankin County handled this thing perfectly. There were many things that were put into place that most will never know about and at great expense to the county… This is a template for how to handle the Westboro people. If lawsuits don't work, other means will. Whatever it takes to keep them from harassing bereaved military families on the day their fallen loved ones are laid to rest ("Westboro Baptist Church Goes").

The WBC, of course, views military deaths differently. As there is nothing essentially "real" about death's meaning, the sacrifice of the body is subject to varying symbolic appropriations. This is where rhetoric steps in to allow meaning to happen. In the discourse we have seen throughout this chapter, the WBC makes clear that the death of a soldier is a sign of God's wrath on America. Death, for them, is still intricately connected to the supernatural realm, but it conveys formidable resonances.

The WBC recognize sacrifices offered for America in its pejorative sense, viewing them as a hedonistic practice. If death carries poignancy, it is only wrought by citizens attempting to appease a self-satisfying avoidance of the real meaning and cause of death—justice for sin. It is in the justification of death that Americans and the WBC diverge. For Americans, death can be justified, even praised, if they are given in behalf of the nation, if, as Marvin said, "the nation calls for citizen sacrifice." The duty, then, rests on the living, as Lincoln affirmed, to "resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain." And this primarily happens in funerals.

For the WBC, death is also justified, but for another purpose. They explain, "The same Bible that prescribes the death penalty for murderers, also prescribes the death penalty for those who engage in homosexual conduct. It is a measure of the perversion of our country—our near-total alienation from God—that the masses cannot see this great national hypocrisy." The greatest provocation of God's wrath, according to the WBC, is homosexuality. "It's NOT OK to be gay," they exclaim. "It will damn the soul, destroy the life, and doom any nation that tolerates such evil. God Hates Fags is a profound theological statement, which America needs more than it needs oxygen or bread." While it may seem that the WBC would target specific individuals who they believe to be

homosexual, they are actually targeting the symbolic ceremonies that most piously honor the country. Individuals connected to larger entities like the military signify God's judgment on his nation as a whole. In protesting military funerals, the WBC is targeting the symbolic ceremonies that are most pious to the nation, rather than merely targeting gay citizens. No one is innocent, even though only a portion of the population experience death as a repercussion of an entire nation's sin. Funerals and vigils reflect the community's collective grieving experience, a shared tragedy, so individual deaths can have a punishing affect on the larger population ("Westboro Baptist Church *Anti*").

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we witnessed an unsettling and growing stand-off between "traditional American patriots" and the Westboro Baptist Church. The inclination for many observing this stand-off is to turn to law books for resolutions (and thankfully, many do). However, even though there are usually allocated spaces and times for protests to occur, I would refer to *TIME* writer Romesh Ratnesar, who, upon hearing a law professor's "open and shut case" answer to the dilemma over Park51, posited, "But the question isn't going away" (Ratnesar). Similarly, the question in this circumstance is not so easily resolved. Chalking up the WBC case to an arbitrary conflict that merely requires legal, philosophical, and even theological experts would dismiss a fundamental component of communities—rhetoric. I have attempted to highlight the voices in this dispute, those from the WBC, from the smallest of the onlookers, from the survivors of victims, and even from the dead themselves. Without these voices, our democratic society is diminished, power is taken from people, and our potential to become better informed about the human experience in pluralistic communities is wasted.

CHAPTER 4

THE ORDAIN WOMEN MOVEMENT: ANALOGICAL LEAPS AND THE FAITH OF ARGUMENT

> "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven… For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them;* and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*."
>
> —Matthew 13:10-11, 17

> "We do not seek to eradicate the differences between women and men, but we do want the LDS Church to acknowledge the similarities."
>
> —All Enlisted

Perelman describes analogy as a relationship between the theme (the unfamiliar) and the phoros (the known). The goal is to make a comparison that will lead to understanding something better than before, to "uncover" the truth. A building can become a symbol of hope or terror merely through likening it to something that is hopeful or terrifying. As we have seen, analogies invite conflict as agonists disagree about the adequacy of phores used to render the identity of a theme. The Park51 case demonstrated how analogies provide rhetors a quick and accessible means of argument; sometimes they are the easiest way to make a point. What's more is that analogies can reflect an aggressive tendency. The rapid escalation of the Park51 controversy may support that assumption, but so does the graphic and outlandish picketing of the Westboro Baptist Church, claimed to have caused Al Snyder debilitating depression. While these cases potentially portray analogical argument as a hasty rhetorical weapon, this chapter focuses on the restrained and subtle movement of analogy, one that recognizes the gradual construction of the theme through the artful efforts of rhetors constrained by

circumstance. In this chapter, I look at analogies *in-process*, where the leap made between phoros and theme happens by degrees. I closely examine the work rhetors do to develop the relationship between theme and phoros, or how rhetors cultivate the seed of a theme as they argue what that seed will become.

For women seeking the ordination of the priesthood—an office exclusive to men—in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS church), this analogical process is demonstrated by highlighting a similitude between men and women. Making clear the doctrinal and cultural inequality between genders, Mormon feminists venture to bridge the male-female divide by projecting a vision of women fulfilling priesthood responsibilities. This vision includes women wearing "men's clothing," involves the transposing of male-female pronouns in prominent sermons, depicts women performing priesthood ordinances, and presents women walking with men to a conference exclusive to priesthood holders. These analogical arguments are presented inside and outside of LDS meetinghouses and on feminist websites, and they are reported and discussed widely in the media, blogs, and indirectly in church leaders' sermons. I will mine these textual materials for my analysis.

Activists make these analogical comparisons between men and women for several reasons, the foremost being that they are constrained by a top-down institution, governed by apostles and prophets to whom God reveals his will. Analogy enables rhetors to speak boldly without defying the authority that guides the church. It presents a relationship between phoros and theme, and invites audiences (including leaders) to recognize the comparison and make deductions, for themselves, regarding the role of women in the church. One feminist, cited later on, described this rhetorical maneuver as "gentle"

(Brooks *Religion*). Acting too hastily in their construction of the analogy, however, rhetors can find themselves guilty of a severe sin—apostasy—which can lead to excommunication and jeopardize one's social standing and eternal destiny.

This chapter chronicles the efforts by Ordain Women (OW) activists, comprised of mostly devoted Latter-day Saints, who petition the prophet and apostles for a divine manifestation concerning women and the priesthood. They draw upon the familiar as to invoke a more comprehensive and accurate vision of God's kingdom on earth, a vision that includes a more complete and accurate role of Mormon women. Essentially, we will see activists ask "sovereigns" to appeal to a Higher Power as to validate the analogy they make—that the roles of women in the church should be recognized in the same manner as those of men, and subsequently be given the same responsibilities.

JUSTIFICATION: BEING "STUDENTS OF OURSELVES"

Different to the previous two cases, the controversy over whether to ordain women to offices occupied by men in the LDS church demands a greater justification for analysis. Why should those interested in contemporary American controversy, especially religious arguments happening at the state level, care about a conflict within a relatively obscure religion? It is rather difficult to imagine President Obama and a half-a-dozen presidential candidates weighing in on whether Mormon women should receive priesthood ordination. The civic and religious domains occupy different places in the public sphere and, arguably, do well remaining distinctly independent. But as we've seen throughout this dissertation, these two domains are undeniably interconnected in many ways. The "Ground Zero Mosque" strikes national chords in our collective American piety, so that even the "salt of the earth," every-day folk who comprise the communities

of the US feel moved and have, to a certain degree, a stake in the matter. The case of the Westboro Baptist Church connects to us in similar ways as they wedge themselves into the symbol of our national patriotism and grief—military funerals.

One of my goals from the beginning of this project has been to show how religious discourse has been constrained into a hinge which makes religion unworthy of any attention beyond certain categorizations. If the religious hinge spotlights impassioned support for or adamant resistance to allowing religious voices in the wider political public sphere, this chapter seeks to overcome that binary by looking at how analogies that resonate with supernatural realms are used for political purposes. By observing how lay members, "citizens," in a religious entity petition their leaders, the "sovereignty," for doctrinal reform, we can better understand the power and nature of religious talk in the public sphere. Whereas the emergence of religious rhetoric in the secular arena can "energize the zealots" or validate the "delusion of the pious," I will explore the oratorical art of religious rhetoric by analyzing analogical arguments between invested agonists.

As the conflict of female ordination is generated by LDS congregants seeking doctrinal and cultural reform through utilizing democratic principles from the outside civic domain, other congregants, and especially church leaders, resist the outside domain, disengaging in conversations "of the world," preferring to dwell "in the world" as a separate unified entity. Both groups, however, are couched in a public sphere that is removed from the larger societal framework that tends to dismiss outlying, esoteric "squabbles." Unlike the Park51 and WBC cases that aptly appeal to argumentative engagement by rhetors and scholarly scrutiny by rhetoricians, this case, involving the LDS church, is one that prefers to hash things out behind closed doors. Unfortunately,

scholars too often notice the "do not disturb" sign and turn to other options that would more easily invite analytical scrutiny.

This is the same dilemma Camille K. Lewis faced in justifying her analysis of Bob Jones University. She argued that while most scholars consider religious sectarian rhetoric "a private matter," "mysterious," and even too "religious" for inclusion in the public sphere, it bequeaths us, in the spirit of Burke, "to be students of zealots as to be students of ourselves." The analogical arguments that take place with the OW movement come to characterize something important about who we are as symbol-using beings. Resisting a common tendency to trivialize this case, Lewis's goal supports my own: "to shake off hasty generalizations and resist hackneyed dismissals of anything sectarian." I specifically direct my justification to scholars reading this analysis, just as Lewis did. "If we scholars reaching for a more egalitarian public sphere can imagine a way to include even the religious separatist, then hope remains to include other frequently silenced voices." I hope to demonstrate that the voices in this chapter are worthy of critical assessment as to more fully understand their role in the broader public sphere and ourselves as symbol-using beings (xi-xii, 11).

AGENTIAL REVELATION: ANALOGY AS A LEAP OF FAITH

Analogy and religion share an important identity through their similar processes of discovering truth, a method perhaps most appropriately understood as revelation. In the scripture quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus explains why he uses parables (which are essentially analogies): "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." The verses depict Deity encouraging audiences to understand truth not in passive attendance but by making effortful, thoughtful judgments between

two concepts. Burke's notion of identification helps us more clearly see this process: to recognize the ambiguous distinction between two entities so as to understand their consubstantial togetherness and apartness (*A Rhetoric* 21-25). Through locating these shared identities, it is then "given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Simply put, God presents an analogy, then leaves it up to the individual to reason and draw conclusions for herself. Thus, revelation is about the connections an individual makes between the theme, the mystery, and the phoros, the recognizable (e.g. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed…") (Matthew 13:31). Revelation takes place through rhetorical inducements that invite an audience to reason and make cognitive judgments. This perspective of a Divine pedagogy prefers to value truth (small-*t*) rather than Truth. It more closely follows an edification wrought through the rhetorical landscape of the public sphere, the *via diversa*. (Sloane 8). Rhetors put the responsibility on audiences to make the connections on their own, or disprove the connections. Therefore, where there is analogy, revelation is close by.

Conversely, when a citizen argues by analogy, she is exercising a kind of faith in the unknown. Arguing analogically requires a confidence in claiming that such-and-such is right, that one thing shares an identity with another. Argument, I would suggest, is more about belief than it is about what is "certain." The leap a rhetor makes from the phoros to the theme is a leap of faith. In other words, as the rhetor presents a phoros to an audience in faith, the audience then must *act*, making the connection between the phoros and the theme. This relationship between rhetor and audience is important to recognize as it demonstrates a co-dependent production of truth.

Viewed religiously, it is a doctrine particular to Mormon theology, a doctrine I will term "agential revelation." Mormons believe revelation can work as a light switch, where what was unknown is suddenly and brightly illuminated. Or it can take the form of inspiration, like the steady increase of daylight from the rising sun (Bednar). But crucial to both forms are the efforts of the truth-seeker. The God of Mormonism desires to reveal truth to His people, but requires more than mere prayers. In 19th-century Mormon history, God chastised one of the church's forefathers, Oliver Cowdery, an interaction that has since been canonized into Mormon scripture: "You have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me." Rather, receiving divine insight required Cowdery to "study it out in [his] mind" (D&C 9:7-8). Obtaining the "Spirit of truth" (D&C 50:17-21) is dependent upon the exercise of intellect and agency, for individuals "to act for themselves and not to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26), to "be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness" (D&C 58:27). Mormon scholars Terryl and Fiona Givens reflected, "God gave us a brain; we should be connecting with Him through our brain, through our intellect, as well as our faith. You cannot have one without the other. He gave us a brain to ask really important questions… A lot of this interaction with the divine is self-revelatory as well as God revealing himself to us" (Fabrizio "Why"). Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, is the "most successful producer of new scripture in the last few centuries" (Hardy 74), yet was burdened by his own responsibility to construct the message that God wanted him to impart. Complaining to a friend, he said, "Oh Lord God, deliver us from this prison, …of a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language" (Givens and Givens 68-69). Agential revelation is, therefore, a co-

authored, co-constructed utilization of reason, imagination, creativity, and divine condescension (Edgley) to receive and ready oneself or others for further understanding and knowledge, in quest to develop a more complete picture of truth.

The tools of faith, works, and self-determination—the foundation for agential revelation—are employed by women laying claim to priesthood ordination. Essentially, the case of the OW movement is about an analogy that *should* be made, a comparison between the current roles, rights, and responsibilities availed to men through the priesthood, and the state of women who are denied those same authorities. Leaping from phoros to theme is illustrated by rhetors who draw upon familiar truths and established doctrine to create the potential for new doctrine. This leap is a doctrinally acceptable act, but exercising such faith publicly can be uncomfortable, even risky, for onlookers would generally rather cling to what is familiar or what has already been established by God. Thus, the analogical leap requires a level of patience and diligence by activists so that the shared identity between the domains of women and men in the church can be divinely validated and socially accepted.

Unlike the guileless Newt Gingrich who's team was criticized for their rapid-fire comparisons of Park51,[1] OW activists who seek reform in the LDS church will pay a greater respect to the analogical leap they make, allowing us to see the theme-phoros connection take place. Constrained by the religious authority to which they appeal and the pace of change in orthodoxy, rhetors in this controversy demonstrate the oftentimes

[1] Gingrich's spokesman Rick Tyler told *Salon* that "building a mosque at Ground Zero 'would be like putting a statue of Mussolini or Marx at Arlington National Cemetery.'" *Salon* asked "what the 19th century German philosopher had ever done to America," and Tyler responded, "Well let's go with Lenin then." Justin Elliot. "Gingrich aide: Mosque at Ground Zero is like statue of Marx at Arlington." *Salon*. 20 July 2010. Web. 8 June 2015. <http://www.salon.com/2010/07/30/mosque_like_marx_at_arlington/>.

delicate process of arguing by analogy. Ultimately, this controversy illustrates conflict happening at the moment of and work surrounding the analogical leap.

A CHURCH OF PARADOX AND THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

Paradoxically, the LDS church espouses both the known and the unknown, completeness and incompleteness. This paradox is found in two of the church's core tenets—it is Christ's church once again established on the earth in its *fullness*, and it is guided by Christ through *continual* revelation. On the one hand, it is always described as a "restored" church rather than a church "being restored" or "in progress." Yet on the other, one of its official "Articles of Faith" posits: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will *yet reveal* many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" ("Articles" added emphasis).

This paradox is exemplified by the church-governed prophet and apostles. These 15 men possess the authority to lead the church as God inspires them. Considered seers and revelators, these men provide counsel to members by applying established doctrine to evolving societal circumstances. New doctrines build upon and expand the old. Rarely do they completely uproot longstanding practices and policies. Familiarity is the base of Mormonism, supporting the construction of new knowledge.

Yet this presents another paradox. Joseph Smith, the church's first prophet, wanted all to experience God as he did. Not only are the heavens once again open, they are wide enough for more than just leaders to access the mysteries of God. While LDS clergy seek out God's will and speak in His behalf to the body of the church, truth can be spiritually manifested to all members. Historian Richard Bushman explained this unique religious characteristic: "Joseph was designated as the Lord's prophet, and yet every man

is to voice scripture, everyone to see God. That conundrum lies at the heart of Joseph Smith's Mormonism" (175). Smith himself stated that "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them" ("Chapter 22"). Members have access to the mysteries of heaven using the same method that the First Presidency (the prophet and his two councilors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles appropriate—the process of revelation.

As revelation is graspable to all, it would appear that any member could make any claim about God's will, doing so under the "conditionless" right to access it. If leaders and members of the church work by the same means to know God's will, members could purport contrary truths. What's more is the finite and imperfect nature of the human condition and what that could mean for previous prophetic statements. The Givens note that, in Mormonism's understanding of revelation, the traces of heaven and the degrees of inspiration "are filtered through an individual's mind and cultural environment… This does not suggest a process by which a prophet invariably takes dictation as the Lord verbally recites a set of verses" (Givens and Givens 56-57). Discerning the Divine voice is broadly available, but implicitly constrained in the process. Thus, as a recent apostle acknowledged,

> There have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine. I suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is

perfect, and His doctrine is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes (Uchtdorf).

These components of Mormonism—the church becoming evermore restored and complete by revelation (which suggests incompletion), the open-access to God's will (which includes the potential role of women in God's church), and the fallibility of the human mind (which encompasses the production of past doctrine)—all imply an institutional vulnerability that entails conflict and chaos. What helps maintain congruence and mitigates unruly voices in the institution, however, is the delegation of priesthood keys and authority. Priesthood authority is the power of God granted to man to act in His name. God uses this power to create and govern the heavens and earth and to save and bless the lives of his children. Bestowed to members within the LDS church, the priesthood can be used to perform miracles like healing the sick, to conduct ordinances like baptism, and to preside in offices that oversee the affairs of the church. All of these acts and roles are wrought under the authority of the priesthood.

Priesthood keys are different than priesthood authority in that "'keys are the authority God has given to priesthood [holders] to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth.' Every act or ordinance performed in the Church is done under the direct or indirect authorization of one holding the keys for that function" (Oaks). Bearing the priesthood is limited to males beginning at age twelve, and the prophet possesses all of the keys necessary to preside over the entire church ("Chapter 14").

While many women will argue their roles in the church as sufficiently important, powerful, contributive, and full of opportunity, Ordain Women, organized by Kate Kelly, emphasizes that these roles are "delegated duties that are supervised by a priesthood

holder" (Fabrizio "Mormon"). If that is the case, an equally important question includes: to what extent should LDS congregants be able to publicly voice their beliefs in a sovereign-governed religion, especially if those beliefs oppose orthodoxy? Though this question can easily lead to a hinge-typical discussion surrounding policy, we use it to begin considering the ways rhetors negotiate meanings through analogies, an important means of persuasion. Examining how rhetors used analogies in this controversy provides a more comprehensive understanding of how religion, controversy, and analogy work together as an interconnected system that pierces the religious hinge and heightens our awareness of the significance of religious voices in democracy.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND DISSENT

The year 1993 in Mormon history is defined by many, particularly dissenters of the faith, as a "purge" in the LDS church. It is marked by five excommunications and one disfellowshipment in the same month, although various other members had been similarly disciplined around the same time but did not receive media attention (Haglund). Known as the "September Six," the group was comprised of scholars and feminists who, because of actions deemed apostate, were "prosecuted" in a church court or disciplinary council. Whereas disfellowshipment is a less severe form of disciplinary action and membership is retained, excommunication, for Mormons, has eternal, social, and, in some cases, professional ramifications (Ostling 361). The Six are generally believed to have been disciplined because of "apostasy," which in their cases meant raising questions about official church history and calling for the ordination of women. More than just an isolated incident, this conflict reflected a general uneasiness growing between church leaders and a rising generation of intellectuals (Johnson). Widely cited in conjunction

with the September Six is high-ranking church leader Boyd K. Packer, who, in May 1993, spoke of the dangerous rise of the "gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement (both of which are relatively new), and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals. Our local leaders must deal with all three of them with ever-increasing frequency" (Packer).

Most other religious groups focus disciplinary actions on clergy in prominent and exposed positions, but the LDS church, while prosecuting more of its members, rarely ever makes known its reasons for excommunication, and councils are always a quiet affair. Disciplinary actions against members are kept private (Ostling and Ostling 361). Still, because of the media attention that the 1993 "purge" received, it caused a loud enough ruckus to quiet feminist activism for years (Wangsness).

Apostasy involves defying church authority or doctrine and can lead to excommunication, especially if a person is leading other members against church norms. Feminist members seeking to reform the church must oblige the sovereigns that "watch over the fold," or they could be found guilty of apostasy just as were the September Six. To honor their personal goals of gender equality while submitting to the authority of leaders, Mormon feminists employ analogy. Analogies provide members a means to argue against the patriarchy without coming across as defiant. At first glance, these analogies could reflect a choice by rhetors to add an interesting aesthetic layer to common feminist polemics, but here, analogies actually level the asymmetrical power dynamic between sovereigns and lay members. Not only do these analogies powerfully illustrate injustices in an unthreatening manner, but church leaders, we will see, respond

to feminists by engaging the analogy. Ultimately, feminists have made and continue to make progress in the church.

However, the group Ordain Women, while utilizing analogy, would demand equality in more direct ways, and Kate Kelly will consequently be excommunicated for apostasy. Briefly referring to the case in an interview, LDS public affairs representative Ally Isom stated, "When you use a grammatical ultimatum, 'Ordain Women,' that is a doctrinal change. It presents some problems." "So the tone is important?" asked the interviewer. "Very much so," responded Isom. Apostasy becomes a threat not in regard to the issues being raised, but fully depends upon the manner that they are presented. "The conversation is not the problem," Isom affirmed. "It is not what is being said, it is how it is being said that becomes problematic. It is really the spirit of one's intent and one's heart that is the challenge… It's a matter of method and conversation. The conversation's always welcome" (Fabrizio "Latter-day"). This section discusses the space dissenting voices occupy that allows feminists to speak amidst the dangers of apostasy. It describes the consequences that have come to those found guilty of apostatizing from the tenets of the church. The purpose of this section is to provide a context for the risk of heterodox voices speaking their minds, and prepares us to better see how the form of Mormon activists' arguments help manage that risk.

During the two decades following the 1993 purge, online forums, blogs, and social media provided a space for individuals to discuss their experiences in the church, including the role of women. Online venues allowed many people still shaken by the 1993 purge to form supportive communities and voice outlying opinions without fear of disciplinary action (Wangsness). On top of this, many, like popular Mormon academic

and blogger Joanna Brooks, have noted the climate of the church to be changing toward a more self-scrutinizing and inclusive identity. The rise of the internet has allowed a broader audience of "traditional" Latter-day Saints to conceptualize the church and their identity in it in less conventional ways (Fabrizio "Counting").

Considering how big the Mormon tent can expand, however, is an escalating debate in the church. When Jon Huntsman, ran for president in 2012, he was fiercely criticized when he proclaimed himself to be a Mormon (Roche). Unlike the clear-cut devout Mitt Romney, Melinda Henneberger of *TIME Magazine* described her understanding of Huntsman's LDS identity this way: "I know less than I did before I asked him."

> "I'm a very spiritual person," as opposed to a religious one, he says, "and proud of my Mormon roots." Roots? That makes it sound as if you're not a member anymore. Are you? "That's tough to define," he says. "There are varying degrees. I come from a long line of saloon keepers and proselytizers, and I draw from both sides" (Henneberger).

Identity for devout Mormons is important, as it has certain implications not just for degrees of belief but for the level of service one provides to local congregations. This is because LDS congregations, including clergy, are comprised entirely by volunteer members, without whom the "whole system would fall;" the church depends upon the "active" and consistent involvement of willing participants. *Salt Lake Tribune* journalist Peggy Fletcher Stack listed the various names attributed to the shades of Mormon identities, being that the term "Mormon" alone is an inadequate label: "liberal, progressive, orthodox, intellectual, true blue, jack, new order, cultural, practicing, Utah,

California and mission field." Devout members use a more bifurcated categorization of Mormons: active and inactive. Thus, adherence to orthodoxy exists at one level of an LDS spectrum of identity, and physical participation exists at another. But both levels are absorbed into a more overarching division—members and excommunicated members or "ex-Mormons" (Stack "Active").

Even though there appears to be a widening range of Mormon types within the community, John Dehlin, a writer on Mormon culture and society, believes that expansion is growing within a narrow faction. They will likely never be completely accepted by, in Dehlin's estimation, over half of the active LDS population. He explained that the church functions institutionally on a very strictly correlated system of dogma and praxis, and active members are less concerned with how or why change should take place unless it comes from the top (Fabrizio "New").

Not only will the space for "un-correlated" Mormons reach a cap within the broader more conservative church body, but dissenters can face excommunication if their polemics or non-conformist views are deemed too public and influential by local church leaders, as they were for the "September Six." Excommunication, according to the church's definition, is "the process of excluding a person from the Church and taking away all rights and privileges of membership. Church authorities excommunicate a person from the Church only when he has chosen to live in opposition to the Lord's commandments and thus has disqualified himself for further membership in the Church" ("Excommunication"). Excommunication can happen for reasons of murder, incest, apostasy, fraud, child and spouse abuse, adultery, rape, the sale of illegal drugs, and other

transgressions (Ballard "A Chance"). But a disciplinary council is always up to the discretion of the local church authorities, not high-ranking officials.

Leaders at the local level, like bishops and stake presidents, are among the congregation of members invited by higher authorities to serve as a congregation's pastor, a calling that can last for five or ten years. There is no monetary compensation with these callings, nor is there any educational or training requirements to qualify. Spiritual worthiness is the only qualification. Members do not lobby for or request the callings they receive. The names of individuals called for any position in the church are presented before congregations during church services and members can then sustain or oppose the calling by raising one's hand.

While the church provides general guidelines to local leaders concerning grounds for prosecution, it is left up to bishops and stake presidents to convene disciplinary councils. Deemed "common judges in Israel" (D&C 107: section heading), these leaders must rely upon their own judgment. Because of the privacy of these courts and the lack of official, fleshed-out prescriptions for disciplining members, it is difficult to deduce exactly the reasons someone could potentially be excommunicated, or why others have been in the past (Demon of Kolob).

"Apostasy," one of the reasons for assembling a church court, is left open for interpretation. For individuals raising their voice against orthodoxy, there could be risk of disciplinary action, including excommunication. Generally, excommunication is considered a rare event by the church ("Why Is a Mormon"), and local leaders have expressed the difficult nature of these decisions (Riess "Mormon"). Nevertheless, when it

does happen, losing one's membership in the church can be incredibly costly in various ways. LDS historian Gregory Prince described it this way:

> Excommunication is a word that does and should send a chill down the spine of Mormons because the entire structure of the family, which in our belief will transcend death, becomes threatened if one of the members of that family is threatened and suddenly jerked out of the fabric and told, "By the way, this is binding here and *there*" (Demon of Kolob).

Prince is referring to a core doctrine in the faith that pertains to salvation. Baptism is an essential ordinance in the church that enables one to become saved in God's kingdom. While this is not an unfamiliar practice to many Christian denominations, LDS theology speaks to more capacious eschatological possibilities than entering the gates of heaven. Further ordinances like the temple *endowment* and *sealing* bless individuals and families with eternal union, continued posterity, and "the kind of life God lives" ("Chapter 47"). In other words, Mormons can be saved *and* exalted, meaning they become as God is and enjoy the bonds within family after death. Mormon founder Joseph Smith, in what is known as "The Vision," divined that those who receive exaltation are

> they who dwell in [God's] presence… know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace; and he makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion… as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God: wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's (Bushman 201) (D&C 76:56-59).

This doctrine undergirds all of the work of Mormonism (Moses 1:39).

More than just the removal of a person's name from the records of the church, excommunication cancels the effects of these saving and exalting ordinances ("Excommunication of John"). Writer Jana Riess described it as an "extreme severance" as one's entire family can be effected (Riess "5 reasons"). Speaking on the subject of church discipline, however, a high-ranking Mormon leader explained it as "a chance to start over."

> Church disciplinary action is not intended to be the end of the process—rather, it is designed to be the beginning of an opportunity to return to full fellowship and to the full blessings of the Church. Priesthood leaders try hard to be sensitive to the disciplined person's needs for understanding, encouragement, counsel, and assistance. They work to see that he or she has regular visits with his or her bishop; that the person has mature, caring home teachers or other specially assigned individuals; and that his or her family receive the attention, counsel, and fellowship they need during this difficult time… Those who sit on the council are to keep everything strictly confidential and to handle the matter in a spirit of love. Their objective is not retribution; rather, it is to help the member make the changes necessary to stand clean before God once more.

Ultimately, those who are disciplined have the chance to return to the church and receive a restoration of previously promised blessings (Ballard "A Chance").

Even in the most idealistic disciplinary council, however, it is not difficult to regard excommunication as a kind of death, which is how rhetors responded to the excommunication of Kate Kelly, the creator of Ordain Women. Conducting a world-wide

vigil for Kelly, rhetors mourned her departure from the church as one who has passed on to another life. Church officials, in light of the description above, would prefer to think of excommunication as a "chance to start over," a rebirth from one's own spiritual destruction. This part of the conflict follows the pattern in the previous two chapters. Constructing the Park51 building was like reliving the 9/11 attack all over again, or, conversely, it was seen as rebuilding a new life. Military deaths were sanctified gestures of the ultimate sacrifice, instilling the nation with a continual lifeblood deemed essential by its Creator. But on the other side, those fallen soldiers, according to Westboro, were eternally damned. So too does this case reveal a conflict between two competing symbols—birth or death—of a single action.

In the next two sections, I specify a number of analogical tactics Mormon feminists used to progress further toward gender equality. Highlighting a likeness between men and women, feminists constructed an analogical comparison between genders in a variety of ways, through dress, use of pronouns, comparing numbers, photographs, and marching. I analyze these analogical arguments to illustrate how feminists accomplish their goals within a top-down institution governed by prophets and revelators. Engaging the issues through analogy will prove fruitful not only because women will receive important privileges and freedoms, but because they assist in keeping the dangers of apostasy at bay. Unfortunately, notwithstanding her efforts to utilize analogy as a form of argument in gaining equality, Kate Kelly will suffer the consequences of one who, perhaps, "strayed" too far from the safety of analogy.

THE "MORMON SPRING": "A NEW ERA OF REVELATION"

Feminists within Mormonism had been writing about equality years before the Ordain Women movement took place (Cohen), but it was an event conducted on December 16, 2012 that ignited conversations amongst lay members about the role of women in the church. Initiated by Stephanie Lauritzen, "Wear Pants to Church Day" was posted on Facebook on December 9th and immediately received the support of thousands. The day was meant to "raise awareness and visibility," said Lauritzen, "to allow Mormon feminists to say, 'We're here, we're all in this together, and we're ready to work to make the Church better. We're faithful. We're serving. We're ready to work.'" A self-described active member, Lauritzen sensed a "growing frustration in the Mormon feminist community that we talk a lot, on blogs, on Facebook, but we never take direct action." Pants Day was created as a "peaceful resistance to cultural norms." Lauritzen explained that wearing pants would constitute "a gentle first step," and church rules would not be broken (Brooks *Religion*). The gentle first step was a part of constructing an analogy that would in turn open members' minds to what Divinity was ready to bestow upon them. Women's progress would be catalyzed through a male-female comparison, a comparison that, in this step, took the form of women wearing "men's clothing." Mormon women typically wear dresses; adopting the male tradition of wearing pants to church created a comparison between the genders, and consequently began a conversation around women in the church, one that hopefully invoked the Spirit of truth. They explain, "We do not seek to eradicate the differences between women and men, but we do want the LDS Church to acknowledge the similarities" (Harper). Analogy, in this way, was a way to generate revelation.

The customs of public worship in any religion are heavily shaped by community practice, and abiding a legacy of order can secure social control however intentionally or consciously imposed that control becomes. It was unsurprising, therefore, to see members responding adversely, even hostilely, to such a disruption (Pratt). Officially, the LDS church neither supported nor opposed the Pants event, simply stating: "Attending church is about worship and learning to be followers of Jesus Christ. Generally, church members are encouraged to wear their best clothing as a sign of respect for the Savior, but we don't counsel people beyond that" (Harper).

Yet many were thrilled with how Pant's Day opened members' minds to what God potentially had in store for women. Blogger Joanna Brooks called the event "the largest concerted Mormon feminist effort in history," observing that these new grassroots feminists have found a way to help members renew their faith even after the thirty-year cultural message that "feminism [equals] excommunication" (Brooks "Ask"). A few weeks following the Pants event, an effort called "Let Women Pray in General Conference" was organized, also on Facebook. General Conference is a semiannual occasion in the church in which high-level leaders, including the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, address the entire church body world-wide. Transmitted live and translated into ninety-three languages, this conference is, as apostle Jeffrey R. Holland described, a "unique phenomenon" whose messages are inspired under the "direction of heaven" and reach an audience larger than its 15 million congregants (Holland). While women have offered prayers in their local congregations for over thirty years, women have never prayed in General Conference since the church began in 1830. Let Women Pray instructed individuals to write letters to General Authorities; reportedly,

the drive generated over 1,600 letters from 300 participants. That April, the effort seemed to work as Jean A. Stevens became the first woman to offer a prayer at the worldwide Mormon meeting.

But the church claimed that the selection of speakers pre-dated the Let Women Pray effort (Stack "First"). Not only this, but the church had recently been taking steps toward providing more equal opportunities for women. Church president Thomas S. Monson, in the October 2012 General Conference, declared that the church was lowering the age for full-time missionary service from 19 to 18 for men, and 21 to 19 for women. The church's missionary program is foundational to the faith, numbering 58,000 missionaries just before the time of the change. The change may seem trivial, but in the Mormon community, it was viewed as a significant step forward for women. "I am overjoyed," said Joanna Brooks.

> This changes the narrative for young Mormon women in pretty fundamental ways. It uncouples church service from the expectation of marriage and motherhood and teaches young women they should take responsibility for knowing their faith… It will change the Young Women's program for us… It says to all of us it's time to serve shoulder to shoulder.

Mormon feminist Neylan McBaine wrote that it symbolizes

> equal opportunity to gain both cultural and spiritual educations, serve in our external communities, and put those experiences ahead of a rush to marriage… [It] will relieve the stigma of unmarried [LDS] college women [that would] ultimately result in stronger, more equal marriages and more effective church governance in future generations (Stack and Schencker).

Furthermore, in November of 2014, the church changed its employment policy for women teaching in seminary and institute. Women who were mothers of children living at home, or women who had previously been divorced, could now be employed as teachers, whereas before they could not. Yet again, the church claimed these changes were detached from lay efforts to inspire administrative reform. Church educational administrator Chad Webb said that LDS officials have discussed the change for some time, explaining the revision "is not connected to other conversations about women… It's just an educational decision." However, Neylane McBaine believed otherwise:

> This change is the latest in a series of policy changes that indicate our leadership's willingness to consider and embrace best practices for the inclusion of women and incorporate them into our own institution… As with women's presence in any influential or deliberating body, the increase in women's voices in [the Church Educational System] will result in a richer experience for all our youth, additional role models for our young women and a reinforced message that our women can be leaders in doctrinal scholarship (Stack "New").

Lowering the age for full-time female missionaries, Wear Pants to Church Day, Let Women Pray in General Conference, and reforming the policy on female employees are instances in which comparisons were made between men and women, revelation followed, and the church subsequently changed long-standing practices. The unknown theme of *woman* in the church, including her role and the subconscious oppression that constrains her, is made known through transposing the familiar phoros of masculine norms onto something outside of that gender realm. This wave of analogical

comparisons, subsequent revelation, and policy changes in the church was perhaps best described by blog commenter Libby Boss, who termed it a "Mormon spring." She, like many active Latter-day Saint women, perceived this spring as "[n]ot a revolution, certainly…but a new era of revelation that transforms the church we love in a fundamental way, the likes of which we [haven not] seen for over a century (Wangsness)." One important part of this spring was the Ordain Women movement.

ORDAIN WOMEN

Kate Kelly, a human rights attorney and active church member, appreciated the steps forward, but was "disheartened by the lack of substantive change and open dialogue on gender equality in the church." In 2013, she created the Ordain Women website "in order to directly communicate our hope for parity" (Kelly "Kate"). Kelly is one of several OW board members "[working] for equality and the ordination of Mormon women to the priesthood" ("Mission Statement" *Ordain*). Rather than making small concessions, Kelly believes that ordaining women would "get to the root of the inequality in the church… We don't see ordination to the priesthood as a remedy for all ills. This is not a cure-all… Ordination we see as sort of a meaningful move to start fixing these imbalances and to make a space for women in the church to use these spiritual gifts" (Fabrizio "Mormon").

OW has enough of a doctrinal precedent to make logical arguments for women's claim to priesthood authority. Historically, Joseph Smith was going to make the Relief Society—the church organization comprised of all adult female members ("Relief Society")—a "kingdom of priests." There was, Smith said, "no more sin in any female laying hands on the sick than in wetting the face with water." Furthermore, in Mormon theology, Deity is not comprised of only a male God (although He is the only God to

which Mormons pray), but He is partnered with a female Goddess, representing the potential destiny of all of Their children on earth. OW's mission statement uses this somewhat obscure doctrine in supporting their overarching polemic: "God is male and female, father and mother, and all of us can progress to be like them someday. Priesthood, we are taught, is essential to this process. Ordain Women believes women must be ordained in order for our faith to reflect the equity and expansiveness of these teachings" ("Mission Statement" *Ordain*). Yet more than employing these historical and doctrinal bases, OW, like the other feminist initiatives, uses analogy as the core mechanism in reforming the patriarchal traditions in the church.

The analogical leap that OW seeks came in several forms, but it came most notably through their website and their march to General Conference. An initial view of the OW website, Ordainwomen.org, would likely be strange to Mormons and non-Mormons alike, but for different reasons. Several images immediately appear on the homepage. These include a photo of individuals encircling a person with their hands on the person's head, another photo of someone passing a tray of water to congregants, and another showing two people dressed in white standing in a pool of water. While these motifs are all too familiar to Mormons who would immediately recognize them as common ordinances, what would shock Saints is that these images depict *women* performing these ordinances. Far removed from the Latter-day Saint mind is the idea of women engaging in priesthood duties, and such images would not only be striking, but upsetting. The tradition of the ordinance is as sacred as the ordinance itself. Sacredness comes from a piety and regard for past revelation, the foundation for the church, and

contradicting that revelation in any degree is confusing and uncomfortable, even for a people who adhere to all "that [God] will yet reveal."

But that's the part of Mormonism that Kelly wants to emphasize, and she desires to challenge cultural and religious norms in order for the analogy to become feasible, for church leaders to be open to that possibility. "I believe and I sustain the leaders of the church," says Kelly.

> We've always said we sustain Thomas S. Monson as a prophet of God, and that's why we're going through the church leadership structure. That's why "the ask" of OW has been to prayerfully consider the ordination of women because we acknowledge that that's how revelation occurs, that the prophet leads the church (Fabrizio "Facing").

However, to envision women occupying a male space—a space that has been sustained by heaven—would be to re-conceptualize the nature of Mormonism. Apostle M. Russell Ballard, in the same year as the launch of OW, spoke of the "foundational truths about the separate roles of men and women," stating that "[o]ur Church doctrine places women equal to and yet different from men" (Ballard "Let Us). The visual disruption to orthodoxy on the OW website would be incredibly trying to most members because, as Brigham Young University Idaho historian Andrea Radke-Moss explains, "You are so culturally taught that that's not what women do… When you have the image of a priesthood blessing that's taking place, it's not done with women involved" (Fabrizio "Mormon). Therefore, the hope of the OW effort, for Kelly, is "to help open up people's imaginations, open up modern Mormon women and modern Mormon men to the idea of

what it could look like…of men and women laying on their hands together cooperatively to bless others, to heal others, to use this priesthood power" (Fabrizio "Mormon").

A central part of the OW's website are the six "conversations" that enable supporters to instigate cultural and social change. The conversations carry significant analogical force in not only their content but their presentation. They are modeled after the "Six Discussions," an earlier version of the church's official missionary proselytizing strategy for teaching potential converts (Stack "Ordain"). The first conversation includes several "thought exercises" that reverse gender nouns and pronouns in past General Conference talks that are directed toward women. Highlighting the different forms in which women and men are referred exploits the normalcy of those gendered realms. One excerpt is as follows:

> LDS Men Are Incredible! The female leadership of this Church at all levels gratefully acknowledges the service, sacrifice, commitment, and contribution of the brethren… Dear brothers, we love and admire you. We appreciate your service in God's kingdom. You are incredible!

Another section, entitled "Equality Is Not a Feeling," compares the numbers of men and women in organizational capacities and speaking opportunities. The number of male leaders required to form a congregation of 300 people, for example, is 15, but the number of female leaders is zero. Furthermore, the number of men who have spoken in General Conference since 1974 is 359, whereas there have only been 64 women. The numbers are portrayed in a chart with two columns of men and women, juxtaposing the genders in a way that highlights their inequality. OW responds to this gap in gender equality by allowing audiences to visualize women enacting priesthood responsibilities.

They are essentially providing God an opportunity to work through mortals, as He has always done, to continue restoring His church to a perfected state of being and receive all that He will yet reveal.

Another of the six conversations on the OW site takes members through a narrative-driven scenario of what Sunday services would look like if equality between men and women had been institutionalized:

> Picture a typical future Sacrament meeting when women are ordained. Sitting in the pews, you look up on the stand, and you see both men and women sitting together on the front row by the pulpit. The bishop is a woman, surrounded by her two counselors, one male and one female, all in their Sunday best. The bishop stands up to give the opening announcements, and at the pulpit she welcomes the visiting stake high counselor and thanks her for being there today. As you look to your left, you notice your ward's youth, both the Young Men and the Young Women, sitting in the first two rows by the sacrament table, ready and willing to pass the sacrament. After the sacrament hymn, a Young Woman you teach blesses the bread and reverently hands trays to her peers below along with the young man standing next to her. One young woman, a deacon, walks to your row and, with utmost reverence, holds the bread tray out to you.

As we can see, the website illustrates activists contributing to a revelation that they believe is divinely sanctioned and awaiting the faith and support of church members to be received. It is an invitation to leaders to be open to the possibility that it is what God

wants for his kingdom on earth. The images and descriptions on the OW website add to the construction of the analogy in-process: that the true role of women can be more accurately conceived by imagining women fulfilling male-typical duties. However, activists will not limit this construction to hypotheticals alone. Women will begin enacting their vision of ordination by walking with men to the male-exclusive Priesthood Session at General Conference and seeking entrance.

As a part of the world-wide semiannual conference of the church, the Priesthood Session invites all males over the age of twelve (regardless of whether they hold the priesthood or not) to attend the session and listen to talks by General Authorities—including the prophet—concerning priesthood duties and responsibilities. This meeting is broadcast to LDS chapels across the world from Temple Square in Salt Lake City, the location where all the sessions of Conference take place. To enter, one must have a ticket, which are free and are distributed through a congregation's bishop.

On October 5, 2013, a group of 200 supporters of OW walked toward Temple Square. After having been denied beforehand their official requests for tickets, they walked alongside men young and old on their way to get standby tickets. "We've been praying," Kelly said. "We've been fasting. We have been planning. And what we hope to do is to go into the session, to listen to the prophet, to participate and demonstrate to our leaders not only are we ready to participate in the priesthood session, but that we wish to be ordained to the priesthood" (Green). Once inside Temple Square, the line of activists halted as church spokesperson Ruth Todd "met amicably" with OW organizers. "We were expecting you," Todd said (Higginbottom). She explained that a similar meeting for women had been conducted a week earlier that was meant to strengthen women in the

church, and that the Priesthood Session was meant to strengthen the men. As so, Todd said, "this is no surprise to you, that we won't be able to offer you a ticket or a place to see it" (Green). Later on, the church released a statement in response to the "protest":

> Millions of women in this church do not share the views of this small group who organized today's protest, and most church members would see such efforts as divisive. Even so, these are our sisters and we want them to be among us, and hope they will find peace and joy we all seek in the gospel of Jesus Christ (McCombs).

Notwithstanding the rejection, the march on Temple Square constituted the same aim of OW's website—to visually prepare members and leaders to accept the analogous relationship between women and men's roles in the church. Walking alongside men toward the Priesthood Session and requesting tickets, women activists illustrated a rhetorical performance that further cultivated a similitude between genders in the church. The site of women amongst thousands of men was striking and meaningful in both positive and negative ways for viewers. *The Salt Lake Tribune* described the scene as "a powerful image, just as the Ordain Women group intended" (Moulton). One supporter, Julia Murphy, traveled from Germany to attend the march. Despite not gaining entrance, she commented, "We've raised awareness, people are talking… it was worth the trip" (McCombs). Some saw the analogical argument as defiant and aggressive. LDS blogger Kathryn Skaggs wrote, "I really believe that what God is trying to do with each of us is make us equal to him, versus what the world wants to do which is to make men and women the same." Furthermore, she reportedly posited, "It's not their job to push revelation" (Higginbottom). The statement foreshadowed a resistance that would continue

the next year, when OW would march a second time at Temple Square. For many members, and especially leaders, the analogical push would be too much to bear.

RESPONDING TO THE ANALOGY

The April march catalyzed an even greater response of rhetors who had been debating the movement since the year before. Officially, the church would only respond to the requests of OW through public affairs. On March 17, 2014, in anticipation of the April Priesthood Session, the church's public affairs department released a letter that encouraged OW supporters to reconsider their intention to demonstrate on Temple Square as to maintain a "spirit of harmony sought at General Conference." It also explained,

> Women in the Church, by a very large majority, do not share your advocacy for priesthood ordination for women and consider that position to be extreme. Declaring such an objective to be non-negotiable, as you have done, actually detracts from the helpful discussions that Church leaders have held as they seek to listen to the thoughts, concerns, and hopes of women inside and outside of Church leadership. Ordination of women to the priesthood is a matter of doctrine that is contrary to the Lord's revealed organization for His Church (Moody).

Although the responses to OW through the public affairs department were formal and official, supporters of OW rejected those responses and sought for a dialog with the prophet, apostles, and other general authorities in the church. Said Kelly,

> So far, [the public affairs department] has been the only ones to respond. So I think I'm very justified in saying that they're the ones between us and

> the church leaders. And their responses have gotten increasingly negative, increasingly aggressive… That comes back to the fact that the most threatening part about OW is that we are reverent, we are respectful, we are faithful, and that we will continue to be… We've requested five different meeting with all church leaders, including the female auxiliaries, and never received a response. I feel like if I could just sit down with one of the leaders, and they could just see who I really am, and if they could engage in this conversation, not about me but with me, and with us as sincere, faithful Mormon women, the outcome could be very different (Fabrizio "Facing").

Despite the statements from public affairs, church leaders had seemed to be listening to the concerns of members and had been responding differently, given that certain policy changes had been taking place. Historian Radke-Moss reflected, "I think we're seeing a kind of wave of change, that a lot of people felt emboldened by the lowering of the missionary age for young women. This is something that many Mormon feminists have wanted for years. When that happened, it was seen as, 'Wow, somebody may be listening to us'" (Fabrizio "Mormon). Furthermore, Kelly reasoned that "in the scriptures, we are told to weary the Lord with our petitions. It's important to remember in the scriptures, we're supposed to be ceaseless in our prayers. That is what we see OW doing. We are continuing to ask and continuing to push because we have sincere faith" (Fabrizio "Facing").

However, the topic of women and the priesthood had been progressively prominent in the discourses of church leaders during General Conferences and other

public occasions. Despite not addressing OW's petitions, leaders appeared to confront the issue indirectly by honing in on the analogy that the movement was attempting to construct. Their avoidance of OW was perhaps a move that reflected their disposition to resist engaging "politically" with any matter ("Political Neutrality"). Ultimately, they would use their prophetic voice in the same way OW supporters did—through the agential revelatory process. Despite their mantle, these leaders needed to submit to the means by which revelation is achieved. And because OW supporters had been constructing the male-women "parable" as to open the possibilities for divine revelation, these leaders would seek to render that analogy problematic.

One of the most notable talks in the context of the OW movement was from M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ballard talked about the role of women in the church and the question of ordination, but would not address OW as an organization, nor cite their efforts in any particular regard. He would only refer to what he called "various troubling contemporary social issues," noting that "[t]here are some questions about the Church's position on sensitive issues that are hard to answer to anyone's satisfaction." As referenced earlier, Ballard focused his remarks on the "equal but different" enthymeme. His talk, entitled "Let Us Think Straight," sought to disrupt the analogical leap cultivated by activists, delineating the divinely appointed roles for each gender. He stated, "Men and women are equal in God's eyes and in the eyes of the Church, but equal does not mean, brothers and sisters, that they are the same. The responsibilities and divine gifts of men and women differ in their nature but not in their importance or influence." Speaking of the co-dependent relationship inherent between men and women, he described each gender as "[having] different gifts, different

strengths, and different points of view and inclinations." He specified those roles, saying, "It takes a man and a woman to create a family, and it takes men and women to carry out the work of the Lord in the Church. A husband and wife righteously working together complete each other."

Moreover, along with Ballard's explanation of men and women's roles was an emphasis on what God has revealed, or what has already been established as church doctrine. The sermon's constant refrain, "thinking straight," suggests a call for members to submit to the governing statutes by which the church currently abides. "There is such a thing," he says, "as right and wrong." Appropriating a line from a previous General Conference talk, he stated, "In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know." Furthermore, he said,

> Brothers and sisters, this matter, like many others, comes down to our faith. Do we believe that this is the Lord's Church? Do we believe that He has organized it according to His purposes and wisdom? Do we believe that His wisdom far exceeds ours? Do we believe that He has organized His Church in a manner that would be the greatest possible blessing to *all* of His children, both His sons and His daughters? (Ballard "Let Us").

Another apostle, Dallin H. Oaks, in the April 2014 Priesthood Session, focused on the "genderless" power of the priesthood that blesses the lives of men and women equally. He explained that women do utilize the power of the priesthood when they are given jurisdiction within their callings, and "[w]hoever exercises priesthood authority should forget about their rights and concentrate on their responsibilities." But, as Kelly

would point out, that authority is always delegated by a male who possesses priesthood keys. Similar to Ballard, Oaks spoke of the partnership between men and women, who operated different roles to achieve the same outcome. Citing a previous apostle, J. Reuben Clark, he said,

> The greatest power God has given to His sons cannot be exercised without the companionship of one of His daughters, because only to His daughters has God given the power "to be a creator of bodies … so that God's design and the Great Plan might meet fruition… This is the place of our wives and of our mothers in the Eternal Plan. They are not bearers of the Priesthood; they are not charged with carrying out the duties and functions of the Priesthood; nor are they laden with its responsibilities; they are builders and organizers under its power, and partakers of its blessings, possessing the complement of the Priesthood powers and possessing a function as divinely called, as eternally important in its place as the Priesthood itself" (Oaks).

What is more is that both apostles reference the frequently-cited church document, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Published by the First Presidency in 1995, the Proclamation states: "By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." Through this sacred partnership do fathers and mothers "help one another as equal partners," although certain circumstances "may necessitate individual adaptation." Nevertheless, referring to this document reinforces the different roles and duties that

distinguish each gender, giving precedent to the tradition of excluding women from the priesthood ("The Family").

Ballard and Oaks' use of established doctrine can easily tempt students of religio-civic controversies to fall into a line-defining battle over church policy. On the contrary, I have continually sought to demonstrate how voices in the public sphere reflect the values and concerns that collide around a law, how rhetors respond to and make sense of oppositional arguments in light of laws. While church "sovereigns" could lay down the law, they choose to engage in the analogical debate waged by OW supporters.

A FORCE BEYOND RHETORIC

Despite the powerful invitation analogies extend to audiences to oppose, critique, or make sense of an issue, one available response to an argument, analogical or otherwise, is to silence the rhetor. While General Authorities would only participate in a rhetorical battle in an analogical framework (for they too were concerned with revelation), Kelly's local leaders chose a different game plan. On June 16, 2014, Kelly published an op-ed in *The Guardian* that contained the following explanation:

> On Sunday, I will be tried in absentia for apostasy by the leaders of my former congregation in the Mormon church. I face potential excommunication for the simple act of opening my mouth and starting a conversation about gender equality in the church and the deep roots of this institutional inequality. My grave situation is another example of how silencing women has long been a top communications priority for patriarchical institutions, both literally and figuratively… [M]y congregation's leaders in northern Virginia said nothing to me for over a

> year. Last month I moved away from Virginia and, after I left, I was placed on "informal probation" by my former local congregational leaders and can no longer participate in church activities in any congregation or church, regardless of where I go (Kelly "I was").

As meetings with bishops and stake presidents are kept private by the church, there are only Kelly's public words that provide insight into any degree of analogical engagement. Kelly did make public the letter she received from her bishop regarding disciplinary action, but it merely references "apostasy" as the grounds of possible disfellowshipment or excommunication ("Letter threatening").

Resistance to rhetorically engaging in the feminist analogy is immediately evident in Kelly's op-ed. She mentions that she faced church discipline "for the simple act of opening my mouth and starting a conversation," and a consequence of her probation was "to literally keep my mouth shut." She claimed her leaders sent her the following directive: "If you are invited to pray or read a passage or comment in a class or other Church meeting, you must decline." Interpreting this injunction, Kelly explained, "I am not even allowed to speak when spoken to in church." She described the feeling "as though a physical gag has been placed in my mouth each Sunday, and the pain of knowing my feelings and ideas are unwelcome is sharp" (Kelly "I was"). The resistance to the analogy by cutting off communication was a complete shutting off of the potential for revelation. In an interview a few days before her trial, Kelly stated,

> I think that's emblematic of the problem that this type of disciplinary counsel is intended to do which is to silence me. My stake president said, "You don't have to change your mind, you just can't say anything about

> it." And I think that's the most insidious, terrible part about this entire process is to tell someone, "You can think whatever you want, but you can't open your mouth." … Everything that I've learned as a Mormon woman teaches me that that is wrong—to silence someone, to push someone down, to make them close their mouths is not what Christ taught (Fabrizio "Facing").

The struggle reflected in Kelly's description is between using discourse to invite other pathways of thinking, and being stripped of the capacity to speak as to approach the throne of revelation, leading to change. It is a powerful statement, given the grave consequences of excommunication, to say that the "most insidious, terrible part of this whole process" is to not be allowed to speak. The description invokes the imagery of rape, and in the context of this case, reflects the stark power dynamic between a male-bearing authority to which women must submit.

That Sunday, the 22nd of June, a worldwide candlelight vigil was held for Kelly in 50 cities in 17 countries (Boyd and Edwards) (although a map identifying locations of vigils shows a higher number) ("Ordain Women Vigils"). That evening, Kelly gathered with 200 supporters in front of the LDS Church Offices in downtown Salt Lake. One by one, supporters stood before the building door and explained why they will not be silent in relation to gender equality in the church. Later that night, Kelly's bishop Mark Harrison notified her that the council had not yet reached a decision, and would notify her within the next two days. Bishop Harrison had reportedly "made a thorough review of her response and other materials, and wishes to prayerfully consider the matter overnight." The news appeared good to Kelly, who was confident that he and the disciplinary council

comprised of 15 men would read the 1,000 plus letters sent to them in Kelly's behalf. However, on Monday, June 23, Kate Kelly received an email that she had been excommunicated.

CONCLUSION

Commenting on the situation, Church spokeswoman Ally Isom said: "In the church we want all to feel welcome, safe, valued, and there is room for questions but how we ask is as important as what we ask, we shouldn't try to dictate to God what is right in this church" (Fabrizio "Latter-day"). Her response speaks to a central idea in this chapter: *how one asks a question* is regarded crucially by rhetoric just as *what is being asked*. This chapter focused on the argumentative choices women made, given a number of constraints, in how they argued for change.

Analogies, we have seen, are discursive means by which agonists seek assent amid conflict, and in the case of the OW movement, the analogical leap between phoros and theme can be a delicate process. Kelly made herself a part of the analogy. She is a Mormon woman comparable to that of a Mormon man, and she exercised a faith that the comparison would be sanctified by God. However, that leap of faith, in the end, proved too far of a stretch across a gulf dividing phoros and theme. On the other hand, she may have been too eager to conflate the genders, disregarding the gradualness required for analogical arguments to take effect. This is particularly evident in the concise, direct, and bold name she chose for the organization she founded, "Ordain Women." Kelly's personal investment in the polemic was ultimately a sacrifice.

This case further fleshed out the complex nature of analogies, particularly as they are used in religious controversies that take a political shape. In previous cases, I

recognized the anxiousness and aggressiveness that often accompanies analogical efforts to create ordered meaning in a world of symbolic instability. This case provided a counterbalance to the intensity of competitive claims, illustrating the "gentle steps" of analogical argument used for social and policy reform. Unfortunately, Kelly's added cultivation to a carefully burgeoning analogy was still too much. Reflecting upon her pre-excommunication efforts, Kelly posited,

> I would contend that OW is not extreme. It's important to keep in mind that what we literally did was patiently wait in a line, and when told to leave, we left. So I don't consider that to be particularly extreme, especially in the context of social movements. But given that, I think that each group needs to follow their heart, and follow the Spirit, and do what they feel called to do. And this is what we feel called to do, and we're doing it with absolute sincerity, and they [OW] I think should continue (Fabrizio "The Excommunication").

Alongside the speed by which a polemic is analogically constructed, this chapter highlighted the value of analogies in hierarchical societies. It can be dangerous for citizens to push against the systems that maintain social imbalance, especially when that push is directed to sovereigns. But analogies seem to accommodate *controversia's* aim: to "[place] opposing claims in tandem" with each other and "eliminate the unfair advantage of a conventionally stronger position." This helps "generate a consensually supported proposition that both adjudicates conflict and leads to prudential action" (Mendelson "Everything" 18). The unfair advantage can be found in both religious and civic settings alike. Inviting all to the dinner table, analogies can begin to level the

playing field upon which lay citizens and powerful officials argue. LDS General Authorities could have ignored women rhetors arguing for a more capacious role in the church, but chose to engage in the analogical enthymemes, thus creating a space for deliberation between agonists invested in the issue. Opposition on either end is not a failed outcome, for it allows rhetors to find new pathways to communicate and argue a given position, expanding the boundaries through which we perceive the issue. This study documented one of these pathways—analogy. It enables us to continue transcending the religious hinge that binds our thinking of religion as something societally unhealthy or nutritious. It regards religious communities within a varied nation and the people who experience the depth and height of American society.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

While religion in American society can be understood through examining political mobilization strategies or laws that permit or impede religious voices in the civic arena, these focuses often confine our thinking about religion's presence in the public sphere to a for-or-against binary. Looking at individual cases involving religio-civic controversies and giving particular attention to the voices of rhetors help us transcend that either-or thinking. In taking a more in-depth approach to the many voices in the public sphere, we initially see that the form that argument takes is intricately connected to what the argument is about. Even rhetors themselves, greatly immersed in the debates concerning religio-civic conflicts, often come to such realizations. Ally Isom's estimations about the dangers of Kate Kelly's actions speak to that point: "It is not what is being said, it is how it is being said that becomes problematic" (Fabrizio "Latter-day"). Similarly, Roy Sekoff, in observing the various sides of the Park51 controversy, concluded, "A lot is in the presentation" (Geller and Sekoff). To better understand the *how* and the *presentation* of arguments, I analyzed a powerful rhetorical device salient in religio-civic controversy—analogy.

Replacing the colored lens of the religious hinge with the rhetorical magnifying glass of analogy, we are able to see much more clearly the detail and depth of the rhetorical action taking place in contemporary American society. What this close reading of discourse does is recovers that which is lost by the religious hinge—a *texture* of argument missed by an overly-trained perspective of religion in the public sphere. Analogies are not filters that merely enable political candidates alignment with certain

audiences, nor do they just mobilize disparate voices into harmonious chords of sameness. On the contrary, analogies, within controversies, help draw out the differences in how citizens experience the sacred in America. Analogies bring scholars closer to the *stasis* of the controversy, "'the issue in doubt,' the precise point on which the dispute seems to turn and on which it is most likely to be judged" (Sloane 40). But more than this, they allow us to understand the divergence of voices in more nuanced and significant ways. Along with placing opposing voices in juxtaposition with each other, analogies invite rhetors to reconceptualize the nature of the phoros and *invent* new argumentative responses.

Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to Olson and Goodnight's observations of controversy. Within controversy is the "oppositional argument" that "functions to block enthymematic associations and so disrupt the taken-for-granted realm of the uncontested and commonplace." Their study of the 1980s "fur as fashion" controversy recognizes new communicative pathways forged by oppositional arguments, and many of these arguments are analogical. For example, they observe rhetors making associations between cruelty and fur production, and on the other hand, wearing fur and enacting one's rights as a consumer. However, despite highlighting many argumentative uses of analogy as a rhetorical act that "blocks, unsettles, and reshapes the commonplace," they do not give any direct attention to analogy as a particular mode of argumentative engagement (249-250). We do not learn how analogies forge relationships between phoros and theme, nor how that forging plays a key role in expanding the boundaries of argument. The word "analogy" is completely absent from the study.

One important contribution I endeavored to make in this dissertation is to highlight analogy as a particular mode of argumentation in controversy that enables, complicates, and perpetuates the diversity and invention of argumentative associations. I hoped to build upon and recognize in a more comprehensive way Olson and Goodnight's understanding of oppositional arguments within controversy—enthymemes "that work outside and against traditional practices of influence… [that which] unsettles the appropriateness of social conventions, draws attention to the taken-for-granted means of communication, and provokes discussion" (250). My focus on analogies is one way for scholars to better understand the *multiplex ratio disputandi*, or the multiple ideas in dispute, and glean important insights concerning the texture of voices within the public sphere (Mendelson "Quintilian" 278).

Specifically, analogies expand the boundaries and pathways for debate by inviting certain responses to a claimed relationship between phoros and theme. In the Park51 case, they were used as quick, efficient means of making strong, complex claims, and dared rhetors to defy the relationship presented between two disparate symbols or ideas. For example, Newt Gingrich and other rhetors compared the "Ground Zero Mosque" and its backers to a Nazi effort: "Nazis don't have the right to put up a sign next to the holocaust museum in Washington" (Delong). However, Daisy Khan defined the opposition to the community center as something that goes "beyond Islamophobia" and is more "like a metastasized anti-Semitism" (Miller "Mosque Imam's"). These particular comparisons open up the possible ways rhetors can understand and make claims about the nature of Park51. Nazis are those who invade the sanctity of national spaces by imposing their own symbolic identity on or near sacred monuments. But they are also

invaders of the mind, generating the phobias that impede civic and religious publics from defending themselves against warped, cancerous, and deadly ideologies. Conflicting arguments expand the possibilities to conceive and construct the issue in dispute, but it is analogies that provide the brick and mortar for new construction to take place. The results of using these materials is the rhetorical texture that is lost in the religious hinge.

Another important contribution to the field of controversy this study makes is how analogy occupies a central place in the heart of religion. It explicates Perelman's description of analogy: "Very often…especially in philosophy and the expression of religious thought, analogy is at the center of the original vision either of the universe or of the relationship between man and the divine" (114). Analogy is the means by which connection to the divine takes place. America, a significantly sacred nation, sets the stage for rhetors to articulate their relationship to the divine, and that relationship is handled, projected, and shaped through analogies. While there are overarching analogies that guide a nation's collective piety, analogies are arguments that are prone to objection. If analogy dwells at the center of God and man's relationship, that relationship has the potential to become unsettled through debate within America's civic public sphere. The case of the Westboro Baptist Church offered an example of the disruption of national piety, unveiling as it were the commonplace and even hidden ideologies through which citizens understand their relationship to the divine. Thus, in the case of Park51, analogies follow the maxim "guilty until proven innocent," calling upon audiences to dispute the rhetorical connection between two entities. But on the other hand, analogies sustain "innocent," longstanding relationships between one's own identity and a larger, cosmic power, and sudden interventions into that relationship summon rhetors to defend that

marriage. Analogies invite rhetors to participate in further constructions of the sacred, but they can be challenged by agonists who strike a different chord with the divine, upsetting the way the analogy has defined the sacred for the general public. The public discourse that undergirds our American democratic society ultimately finds new ways of reflecting the American experience. Understanding the disruptions in our national piety and the subsequent means to defend America's relationship to God provides self-reflection and introspection. The potential this creates for American meta-discourse further illuminates the rhetorical texture within religio-civic controversies.

Finally, this dissertation shows how analogies enable rhetors to speak to sovereigns without forsaking their own objectives and still defer to existing power structures. The Ordain Women movement presented analogy as a significant rhetorical device that makes a "gentle" comparison between phoros and theme. It is gentle enough that those in higher positions can acknowledge the argument and let it play out in their minds. For Mormon prophets who believe in divine revelation, these cognitive processes of reason are necessary for leaders desiring to act in tandem with pending guidance from heaven. As analogies (like parables) are devices used to catalyze revelation, they invite sovereigns to reflect upon relationships in new ways. The disparity between men and women has long been substantiated by patriarchal societies and hierarchies, and gender roles are concretely defined in religious creeds. But particular analogies may provide leaders new ways to consider the relationship between men and women, leading to a reconceptualization of doctrinal and cultural norms. Analogies, as discussed earlier, can be used aggressively and cause forceful disruptions of the commonplace. But they can

also allow rhetors to argue without being bold, and to cultivate reform without being excommunicated from the institution.

As with the Park51 case, my study of the OW movement makes further contributions to the theory of controversy. This, again, is due to observing how analogies operate within religio-civic controversies. Claudia Carlos explains the rhetorical technique of *insinuatio*, "a strategy in which the rhetor hints at his arguments without explaining them overtly." *Insinuatio* helps rhetors "speak prudently" and "state their views in a non-offensive way that maximizes concord" (183). My analysis of the utilization of analogy by Mormon feminists expands Carlos' discussion of *insinuatio*. Carlos describes the discursive journey of *insinuatio* that involves inferring, recoiling, and contradicting one's own logic, among other things. Carlos' explanation of *insinuatio* involves a similar process to *antilogikos*. Mendelson, using Cicero's *De Oratore*, explains *antilogikos* or antilogic this way:

> [A]ntilogic… incorporates the arguments of the other into one's own reconstruction of the case. The goal here is not to develop a single line of reasoning that will yield an undeniable syllogism. Rather, Crassus has begun to circle around his topic, to supplant the notion of a direct endorsement of any one proposition or claim with a tendency toward reversals, inversions, ironies, and oppositions, by adapting a form of response that places agreement and revision in a state of syntactic tension, all in an effort to both answer one's interlocutor and to render the issue in its ambivalent fullness (26).

Insinuatio and *antilogikos* maintain a significant difference in that *insinuatio* seeks to lead an audience to a desired end, but *antilogikos* teaches the speaker to defend all sides of the debate and "rethink his own presumptions. This willingness to scrutinize and modify one's initial position resides at the core of the antilogical process" (Mendelson 29). Conversely, one similarity between *insinuatio* and *antilogikos* is that they vocally articulate lines of reasoning for audiences to better understand the fullness of the issue. They assist audiences in following a logical pathway toward certain ends, whether an end could follow many destinations, as in *antilogikos*, or whether it seeks for a specific destination, as in *insinuatio*. Unlike either *antilogikos* or *insinuatio,* however, analogy, as we saw in the OW case, does not need to issue a ironic or pro-con verbal presentation, nor aid the audience's efforts to arrive to desired outcomes. Photographs and fashion were enough to generate discussion between interlocutors. Drawing a comparison between men and women through transposing tokens of masculinity and femininity, rhetors were able to create rhetorical force from compact modes of argument—analogies. The similitude between two concepts can be reasoned out by the audience themselves and expand the possible ways of conceptualizing the roles of women in institutions and society at large.

The religious hinge, while helpful in pointing to particular ways of thinking about religion in the public sphere, unfortunately misses the rhetorical texture present within religio-civic controversies. This study sought to recapture that texture by recognizing analogies as an important rhetorical device that enables and multiplies the *via diversa* through which rhetors engage in and understand the public sphere. The *via diversa* is "the doctrine that (small t) truth is so complex—and maybe in its variety so ungraspable—that

one has to approach it through different, untried, and even multiple avenues" (Sloane 8). My study discussed analogy as a way to understand American piety that is exposed to objection. We learned that analogy can be as vulnerable to oppositional arguments as it is a force for constructing the sacred. Finally, in this dissertation, I sought to show many voices at work in various controversies. Part of my purpose was to not only illustrate that many positions can be reasonably defended, but analogy is a rhetorical device that enables rhetors to speak in tandem with those that are in more powerful positions.

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